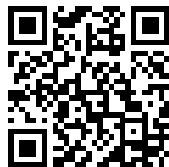


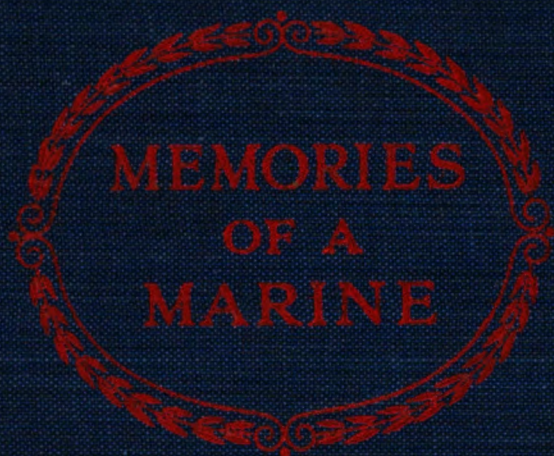
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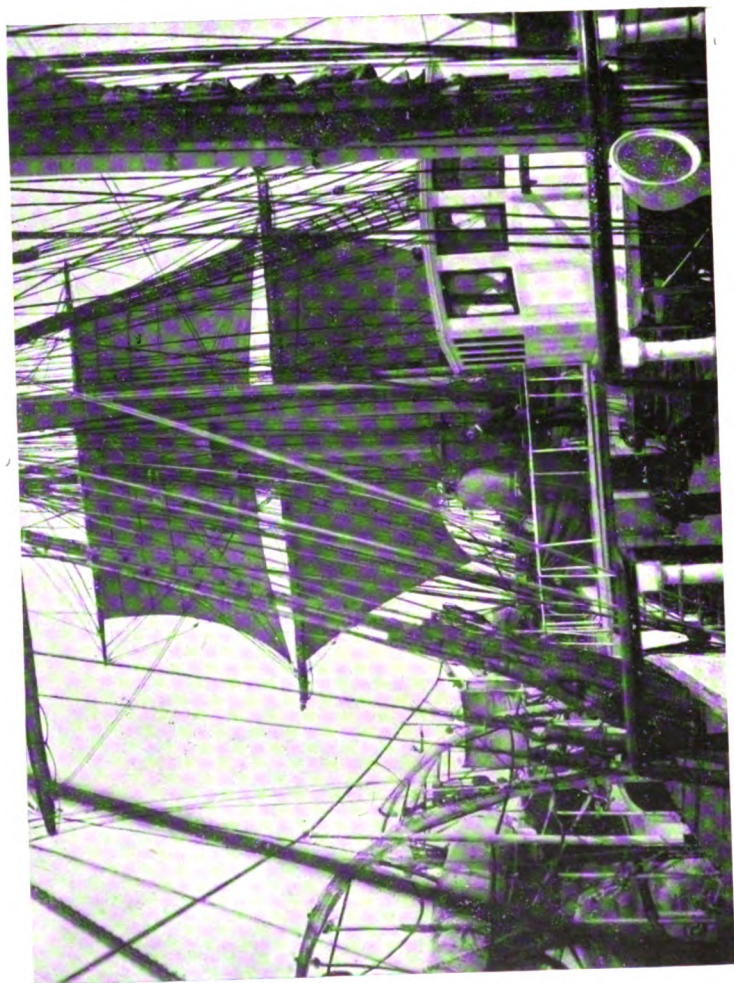
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VISIBILITY IN 1884.

Deck view of H.M.S. *Albatross*, flagship Mediterranean Fleet.

*Frontispiece.*

# MEMORIES OF A MARINE

AN AMPHIBIOGRAPHY

BY MAJOR-GENERAL  
SIR GEORGE <sup>GRC/</sup>ASTON, K.C.B.  
(LATE ROYAL MARINE ARTILLERY)

*"Per mare per terram"*

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## PREFACE

ONCE upon a time I (that objectionable pronoun has come in already, but I suppose that it must come into an autobiography) took a lesson in golf from a professional. He left me severely to my own devices, and watched me. I drove off the first tee. All he said was, "You're pressing, sir." We found the ball in a nice lie. I used a brassey and awaited his verdict. "You're pressing, sir." The next lie was not so good, and I used an iron. "You're pressing, sir; but go on, it's your nature!" With this story in their minds, I hope that readers of these Memories will bear with me if, in describing days spent in the Government service, I recall my occasional forgetfulness of that excellent maxim, *Festina lente*.

The author offers his grateful thanks to the Editor of the *Cornhill Magazine*, to whose help and inspiration the publication of these "Memories" may be attributed.

G. G. A

SALISBURY,  
1919.



**to**  
**D. E. A.**

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# MEMORIES OF A MARINE

## CHAPTER I

### EARLY DAYS

*"All Laws are as nought beside this one : Thou shalt not criticise but obey" (Law of the Navy).*

"How does the quill-driving get on, old chap?"

"Splendidly! Now I am starting on my own life."

"Whatever you do, then, take my advice and cut the 'early years' business!"

That conversation passed in the smoking-room of a Service Club not long ago, between an old shipmate, then one of Their Lordships of the Admiralty, and myself, and after it I hardly know how to begin these Memories.

Early in the past century writers of biographies used to explain their parentage. "Born of poor and therefore presumably honest parents," would be a good opening; but my ancestry and early education are not likely to be of much interest to anybody, so I will take the advice and "cut the early years business." The poverty part of the conventional opening must come in, because it is the dominating feature in the lives of most Marine officers; I think that my own

experiences will show what good times they can have in spite of that drawback.

My chief inducement to join what the Royal Artillery familiarly call the "Fish Gunners," and the Navy the "Blue Marines," was a report that you could live in them on your pay, and that the men were the finest of any fighting force in the world. Accordingly, when I passed from Westminster School into Woolwich, in July, 1879, I elected not to go there, but to join the Royal Naval College at Greenwich, as a Probationary Lieutenant in the Royal Marine Artillery, which I did on the 1st of October, desperately proud of wearing an officer's uniform, especially the little round gold-laced cap of those days. (I had been taken by admiring relatives to be photographed wearing that cap—on the wrong side of my head !) The sword, worn only on Sundays, was also a special attraction.

In my day we could just make both ends meet at Greenwich. We drew 5s. 3d. a day, and paid three shillings a day for our food, which was ample; an abundant breakfast, a luncheon which everyone in the Navy associates with the menu murmured daily in his ears by the boy waiters, pronounced as if it were one word innocent of aspirates—"Rosbeefcornedbeefmutton'amorbrown"—and an excellent dinner, lasting about an hour and a half, and not conducive to subsequent study. Greenwich in the seventies was full of half-pay Lieutenants, who seemed very old to us, possibly because of our own youth, and of Captains and Commanders, whose importance

in the world we were joining we did not realise, as they wore rather seedy old plain clothes. It took us some time to understand their position and world-wide experience. They were very good to us, and told us their high opinion of the Service we were joining, which was encouraging. Then there were the strenuous Lieutenants going in for the Gunnery and Torpedo courses. It was these that we got to know best, as we did much of our studies with them and also our play. Of the acting Sub-Lieutenants we did not see so much. They were fresh from the gunroom, and many of them were still affected by the traditional feeling of contempt for the Marine as an individual which fills the pages of the naval novelist of the old wars, combined, I must add, with an admiration for the R.M. Forces as a whole. The Engineers lived in a different part of the College, where they had their own Mess.

Admiral Shadwell, a great scientist, was President of the College when we joined. He was succeeded by Sir Geoffrey Hornby, whose name stood very high indeed amongst his contemporaries; he had recently held the command of the Mediterranean Fleet which had gone up the Dardanelles and had anchored off Constantinople during the Russo-Turkish War. A great tactician and strategist, he enjoyed the confidence of the whole Naval Service, and in some ways was ahead of his time; there was talk of his going to the Admiralty as First Sea Lord, but he would not do so unless he was allowed his own naval secretary, and this request being refused the project

fell through. One of his theories was that the best way for a senior officer to influence the future was by influencing the younger officers in the Service, who would carry on the tradition; I owe him a good deal myself, and shall never forget two incidents. Once at Greenwich he met me in the main road passing through the College, and, youngster as I was, he put his hand on my shoulder, walked me along, and opened his heart to me about all that the Naval Service meant to the country, and the inspiration of the great tasks that lay ahead. The second incident was in Whitehall, years afterwards, and shortly before his death. I was then serving in the Naval Intelligence Department, and again he walked with me and told me not to be disheartened at the hopelessness of outlook for Marine Officers of those days, adding that a Naval Staff was slowly but surely coming, and there might be openings for them in that direction. I often felt that hand on my shoulder in after years in times that I hope to describe in these Memories.

Candidates for the Marine Artillery spent two "sessions" of about nine months each at the R.N. College, with a splendid holiday of three months, July to September, between the sessions. The course was a stiff one in mathematics, science, and military subjects, and we had to work very hard to pass the final examinations; but there was plenty of play, though Greenwich is not much of a place for open-air amusements. I managed to get into the cricket team, which played a few matches in the summer, learned

racquets, and played lawn-tennis on grass courts in the summer and asphalt in the winter. Rugby football was the great game in the winter months. The ground was in Greenwich Park. It was a somewhat rougher game than it is in these days, with less science, and the boys of the Greenwich Hospital School used to enjoy carrying off the injured on a stretcher, and then bringing the empty stretcher back, putting it down on the touch-line, and standing with their arms folded waiting for the next load.

There were some cheery elements amongst the sea officers, with high spirits and superfluous energy to be worked off after long spells in the uttermost parts of the earth. The College is surrounded by very high railings, and the punishment for the young was to be "gated." The boundaries were guarded by police, but it is a big place, and Greenwich fogs offered for the enterprising a sporting chance of breaking out and getting back again without being seen by the guardians of the peace. One quite senior lieutenant—at least, so he seemed to us—used to specialise in collecting door-knockers, of which he had in his room a varied collection, added to whenever there was a dense fog. Not only were there more fogs then, but the winters seemed colder; during the hard winter of 1881 there was so much drift ice in the Thames opposite to the College that you could have crossed over to the Isle of Dogs, jumping the channels between the blocks.

At the end of the two sessions about half



of us passed the examination in all sorts of deep subjects—differential and integral calculus, physics, chemistry, hydrostatics, kinematics, kinetics, statics, and all the rest of them, as well as all the military subjects, taught in “watertight compartments” under different headings such as fortification, tactics, strategy, topography, and so on, with no inkling of the truth that all such things are part of one art, the art of war; but that was the general practice in the Army in those days. About half of us passed the examination, as I have mentioned, and I heard the good news that I was one of the successful ones during a holiday on the west coast of Scotland, where we were having a grand time sailing round Rum, Eigg, and Muck, along the coast of Mull, and to Iona and Staffa. (As an interesting example of the saying in the Service, “You never know your luck,” I will mention here that my success in that examination cost me, thirty-five years afterwards, the only appointment under the Admiralty open to General officers of Marines. I was told that I had been passed over for it because I was an artilleryman.)

We were ordered to join the *Vernon* at Portsmouth for a torpedo and mining course, so we sailed back to Oban, in plenty of time, as we thought, to join on the appointed day; but when we got a newspaper at Stirling we discovered that we had lost count of the date during our cruise, so arrived at Portsmouth a day too late.

After all that had been rubbed into us at Greenwich about the strictness of man-of-war

discipline it was rather an awesome experience to report oneself a day after the one specified in our orders. The R.M.A. subalterns in those days used to live with sub-lieutenants R.N. at the College in Portsmouth Dockyard while going through courses in Torpedo in the *Vernon* and in Gunnery in the old *Excellent*, then moored off the "*Excellent* steps," still known by that name in the Dockyard. We were let off lightly when we attended the first lecture in the *Vernon*, and spent the next two or three months learning all about the torpedoes and mines then in the Service. We also learned to familiarise ourselves with the seaman's contempt for orthodox pronunciation of the Classics. For instance, *Bellerophon* becomes Bully Ruff'un; *Amphitrite*, Amphitrit; and so on. The Latin expression most familiar to instructors in the *Vernon* was *ex tempore*, which in seaman language was "ex tempor," and always will be, however many University men may have served on the lower deck in the last or any other war. It was all rather refreshing after the impression gained in a public school that to use even a false quantity in Greek or Latin was an enormity transcending those specified in the Decalogue. Reference to "extempor" reminds me of one rather quaint submarine mining device of those times, called the "Shot mechanical extempor mine." You filled a cask with explosive, anchored it, and balanced a round shot on the top. The round shot was attached by a line to a friction tube, which exploded and sent off the mine if the line was pulled. The idea was that

if the mine was bumped the shot would fall off and pull the line. The shot was kept in place, to ensure safety to the minelayers, by a delightful gadget (nautical term for practically any small appliance not specified) called a "goose-bill toggle." It was our first nautical term, and it caused us much joy. We soon learned that practically everything in a ship has a name unknown by the uninitiated, and we rapidly increased our vocabulary.

Another device was the "hand-charge" of guncotton. It was intended to be used in boat actions. The ritual was difficult to learn, especially for those who were unfamiliar with explosives and nervous about handling them. It went thus: You took the guncotton charge in your right hand; to it was attached about sixty feet of instantaneous fuze, and to that a pistol. You held the pistol and the fuze (coiled up) in your left hand. This is how it worked: You first threw the charge at the enemy, hoping that the fuze would uncoil nicely and not get mixed up with your arms or legs. Then you changed the pistol over to your right hand, cocked it, and fired the charge, which should by that time be resting in the enemy's boat. I had the misfortune to go away in a "whaler" boat with a left-handed man to perform this manœuvre. He was very nervous, and in the excitement of the moment he threw the pistol away, keeping the charge in his hand. The coxswain of the boat, a man of resource and a quick thinker, seized the charge out of

his hand and threw it overboard after the pistol.

After the *Vernon* we went through a stiff course in the *Excellent*. Those were the days when agility and quickness of eye were the chief qualities required of gunners. We drilled chiefly at the old truck mountings and smooth-bore guns of the Nelson era, and it was a great experience. The guns were run out and trained by rope tackles, and laid by very primitive sights. The elevation was done by a wedge, two men heaving up the breech end of the gun with handspikes to enable the wedge to be moved. There was tremendous competition between the different gun's crews in the long broadside. We learned how the guns should be prevented from taking charge in a sea-way when the ship was rolling, and it was a good training in using our wits and doing the right thing in an emergency without waiting for orders. Practice across the mud in the direction of Fareham used to be carried out with these smooth-bore guns just before our time, until someone protested at finding a big shell in his back garden. There was also drill with muzzle-loading rifled guns on broadside mountings, and also in turrets, which were just coming into the Service. We were still adhering to muzzle-loaders, and did for many years afterwards, although breech-loaders had been introduced for some time by the French. We had to learn by heart the weight of every gun, charge, and projectile in the Service, and took copious notes. I remember one fuze which, for the sake of safety,

had to be carried upside down, so the bottom of the box containing it was "marked top to prevent mistakes," as the instructors used to tell us. The old crusted joke still endures in the Service. The Whitehead torpedo had just been invented, and, like all new weapons, was expected to "revolutionize warfare"; the torpedo men already looked upon the gun as obsolete. A poem written by one of our term met with much approval from some of the *Vernon* folk of the day. It was based on Bunthorne's song in "Patience":

"If you're anxious to get on  
 With the 'Bow-and-Arrow' *ton*  
 As a first-class Gunnery Jack  
 You must learn the *jeux d'esprit*  
 Of a long-past century  
 With a white-lead-and-tallowy smack,  
 You must learn the fabrication  
 Of a cross-bow, and what nation  
 Fought Hannibal, and which side won,  
 You must study at mechanics  
 To discover the organics  
 Of an early English gun.

"And everyone will say  
 As you go upon your way—  
 'If that young man knows things that are  
 Too obsolete for me—  
 Why what a most particularly 'cute young man  
 That 'cute young man must be!'"

I have just been reading Lord Jellicoe's description of the work of the Grand Fleet in the Great War. It shows that the torpedo so far has not ousted the gun, in spite of those predictions of the

early eighties, but big ships seem inclined to give it a wide berth.

After the *Excellent* we went back to the R.N. College at Greenwich for courses at Woolwich Arsenal in the gun factory, carriage factory, and Royal Laboratory. Of those courses I remember best the elaborate proofs put before us of the superiority of muzzle-loading over breech-loading guns, and the quality of the Madeira and cake consumed after luncheon in the R.A. Mess, where we were hospitably received, and made honorary members. Then, with our heads full of all the learning we had acquired, we joined, early in 1882, the Headquarters of the Royal Marine Artillery at Eastney Barracks, Portsmouth. The first things impressed upon us there were our ignorance of the Service and our unimportance in the scheme of affairs. We began our training in the ranks as recruits, and we were taught that we must learn how to do things well ourselves before aspiring to the command of others; put briefly, the lesson for officers was "Always return salutes, and always know more about everything than the men who are doing it under your command." From the young officer's point of view the drawback in those days was the wide gap in age between members of the Mess. There was no one between us and the senior old bachelor field officers; all the rest were either away at sea or married and living at home.

At that time came the severe test whether we could live upon our pay. During the second

year at Greenwich, and during the time at the College in Portsmouth Dockyard, we received a Mess allowance from the Admiralty, so our food, at all events, was assured to us. On joining at Eastney that allowance was stopped. We dined in the Mess, as we had to pay for our dinner whether we had it or not, but we could breakfast and lunch in our rooms if we liked. This was my routine for economising on food: a bowl of porridge in the morning, stale bread and cheese for luncheon, and as often as possible a call in the afternoon on some people who could be relied upon for a good tea. We used to do either five or four hours' infantry or gun drill before 1 p.m. every day, and played some hard game for an hour or two after luncheon, so we were generally fairly hungry, but only those who had private allowances could afford real breakfasts or luncheons excepting on Sundays.

The disciplinary training was magnificent. There's a certain patch of gravel about a hundred yards square, facing the sea, and forming the middle of the long parade-ground at Eastney. There we learned the Service secret of being two people—the one on duty, the other, one's ordinary self. If you put a foot on that parade you are at once on duty, and subject to the legal penalty of death for disobedience of an order, even from your dearest pal, if he happened to be a day senior to you in the Service. As the "Law of the Navy" puts it:

" All laws are as nought beside this one:  
Thou shalt not criticise but obey "

—and more rigid obedience was exacted under the Army than under the Navy system. The idea conveyed to us was that we had plenty of duties but no rights, a system of training which some still prefer to the more prevalent ideal of lots of rights but no duties at all.

The first thing we had to learn was to stand perfectly still and await orders to move, one of the best of the surface tests of good discipline in any military force. We had to stand in the “first position of the soldier,” the position of “attention,” so weirdly described in the drill-book of the day that the temptation to parody proved irresistible, and the passage was thus rendered in a humorous mock drill-book called “D’Ordel’s Tactics,” which appeared a few years later, written by that charming personality the late Sir Mark Sykes, with a collaborator:

“The exact squareness of the shoulders and body to the front, that is to say, to the direction of the enemy, real or supposed, is the first principle of the position of the soldier; the heels must be in line with the square shoulders and body, and should be closed, the knees straight (not crooked), the toes turned out so that the right toe may point  $22\frac{1}{2}$  degrees to the right of the real position of the enemy, the left  $22\frac{1}{2}$  degrees to the left of the supposed position of the enemy, and thereby forming an angle of 45 degrees with each other, if the real and supposed positions of the enemy coincide (as in regular warfare they should do). The arms should hang easily from the shoulder, and not from the hips or knees. The elbows screwed round, so that the right elbow points directly away from the supposed



position of the enemy, the left elbow directly away from the real position of the enemy; the backs of the fingers should touch the thigh lightly, the thumbs thrown back as much as possible; the hips drawn back, the breast advanced, but without constraint; the body should be upright and inclining forward, so that the weight of it may bear principally upon the soles of the feet (not upon the spike of the helmet); the head, though not used, will be retained erect (not thrown away), the chin and forehead drawn in, the right eye looking at an imaginary object situated six inches in the direction of the supposed position of the enemy, the left eye looking at an imaginary object situated six inches in the direction of the real position of the enemy, the whole easily and without constraint."

(The official drill-book also explained to the uninitiated that a combat in war begins *generally speaking* (*sic*), either by the collision of two forces both in movement, or by one side in motion attacking another when stationary. "D'Ordel" claimed to deal with the exceptional case of a combat brought about by two armies meeting when both are stationary. The official book conveyed the further impression that the enemy in war was always in front of you, and need never be sought for in any other direction. Its influence endured up to the time of the South African War, which cured us of the fallacy.)

The attitude described as standing "at ease" was in those days as constrained as the position of "attention." When our swords were drawn, we dropped the point to the ground and crossed our hands over the hilt. I remember once on a

ceremonial parade trying to do the movement extra smartly and running the point of my sword through my foot; not daring to confess my clumsiness, I managed to finish the parade without limping, but then hobbled off with my Wellington boot half full of blood. We had the same sort of idea about standing rigidly in the siege and field battery gun-drill, which we did on the army system, and learned to handle every sort of gun on land as well as at sea. The loading numbers at the field gun of the day had to stand quite rigid, in line with the muzzle and only a yard away from it, until the gun was fired. It was a good test. There was one abominable little bronze 7-pounder I remember that made a sort of ringing crash when it went off, and one's head buzzed for hours afterwards. We also drilled at old smooth-bore mortars with a range of about 400 yards, which I believe were the very ones mounted on the mortar-boats manned by our predecessors of the R.M.A. in the bombardments in the Baltic during the Russian War of 1854. I saw them not long ago ornamenting the infantry parade ground at Eastney.

Before I leave the subject of disciplinary training there is one more point to mention, the question of dress and equipment. It may seem comparatively unimportant, but the fact remains that the best disciplined corps are always the cleanest and most smartly turned out, and this affects not only *esprit de corps* but health; men who keep themselves clean and smart also keep their surroundings clean, which is the principal

factor in their health when crowded together on active service.

We were also taught to think of our men before we thought of ourselves, and thereby hangs a tale. Many of the men were a much rougher lot than those to be found in the R.M.A. of to-day, and one bitterly cold morning a hardened old slacker came on parade unshaved, explaining that his skin was tender. So was mine, so I told the Company Sergeant to come round to my quarters for some stuff I used to put on my own face before shaving. He did not turn up, and I took the hint. The whole Company would probably have been unshaved the next morning if my methods had materialised.

In those days there was one thing which wanted amendment, because many years of peace had made it into a fetish—"Marching-order Parade." This is a good and necessary exercise if intelligently performed; spotless cleanliness of arms, equipment, and clothing is, of course, necessary, but "marching order" can, without injury to discipline, be a get-up in which marching is possible. In those days it was impossible, and the equipment was unsuited to any purpose whatever excepting display. The valise was of a shiny black, showing the least scratch, and the braces which supported it were of very heavy leather, arranged to press upon the chest and interfere with breathing; that valise was never carried on active service. The canteen, or mess-tin, constantly wanted for use, was also enclosed in a shiny black covering, and so fixed on that

it could not be got at without removing much of the equipment with the assistance of another man. The ammunition-pouches were of very stiff black patent leather, and designed to carry a minimum of ammunition with a maximum amount of inconvenience in access to it. There was a maze of complicated straps, and a vast amount of pipeclay. Preparing all this equipment for parade took many hours; each man had to be helped into it by one or two other men, and much time was wasted that should have been devoted to training. When on board ship, the Marine detachments had to be excused all work for twenty-four hours to prepare to get into a “ marching ” order in which marching was almost impossible. In a hot climate the black surface of the leather melted and became sticky, to add to its other drawbacks. Although proved by experience to be unsatisfactory (it was always left behind on active service) the old black valise endured, at a great expense to the public, for twenty more years. It may also be interesting to mention that, at the date of which I write, officers wore their full dress tunics and brass-bound helmets for marching order and for field days. The tradition of going into action in your best clothes, covered with gold-lace, was still maintained for European warfare, and anyone putting forward the theory that a reasonable amount of comfort in clothing and equipment could be combined with efficiency would have been considered a dangerous revolutionist, striking at the whole basis of discipline.

In the summer of 1882 we had the mortification of seeing a force of R.M.A. leave the barracks for the Egyptian War, leaving us behind as insufficiently trained, although they were very short of officers. We had been trained for about three years by that time; in the Great War some temporary officers got to the front after about three or four months, but that was different. The idea in our Service was to do a long disciplinary training of which the influence would last for a lifetime, in case the demands of the Fleet should prevent our ever having another opportunity during our service. The officers did nearly four years' training, and most of the men remained in barracks and were called recruits for over two years. Many of the "recruits" I took to sea with me the first time wore good-conduct badges, which take two years to earn. The effect of that training lasted so well that even thirty-five years afterwards, when I commanded the corps, I used to find myself automatically bracing my shoulders back and lifting my chin whenever I set foot on that sacred parade gravel.

Soon after the Egyptian War there was trouble in Ireland, following the Phoenix Park murders. We were called upon to send a number of our big steady men of about fifteen years' service to maintain order in Dublin. They were to go over in plain clothes, carrying revolvers in their pockets, and, as time was short, they were each given a few pounds and sent to the shops in Landport to fit themselves out as they pleased. I happened to be the subaltern on duty that day,

and was sent for to inspect them. I found our Sergeant-Major, a rigid disciplinarian, in charge of a small parade in the drill shed, the ranks being filled by men in various garments, chiefly long ulster coats of a loud check pattern, ready for my inspection. In those days, when the command "Open order" was given, the flank men of the rear rank stepped backwards two paces and turned to the right to be "dressed," so that when the remainder of the rear rank stepped back at the word "March!" they could be dressed in line on those points. When the order was given, the two flank men solemnly picked up the Gladstone bags and parcels deposited on the ground beside them, and proceeded to carry it out. The whole procedure looked so quaint that I was afraid of its being too much for my gravity, so the next order was that the train left Fratton station at 4.40 p.m.—"Dismiss!" and the party dispersed. They earned much gratitude from the Irish Executive during the next few weeks.

Our training went on steadily until Christmas, and we had a few more months to do when, during a short leave, I received a telegram to say that I must come back at once to go out to the Mediterranean in charge of the new detachment for the flagship, which was being recommissioned at Malta. So ended the education of a Marine subaltern in the early eighties, and with it the memories of "Early Days." The new crew went out in a transport, and the next event to be noted was a view of a glorious sunrise over the rock of Gibraltar, and then the feeling of pride at seeing

little red specks, British sentries on their posts. We then passed "up the Straits," where I spent altogether six and a half happy years in five flagships of the Mediterranean Fleet.

As an ending to this chapter I will quote (with Sir Owen Seaman's kind permission) an extract from *Punch* of January 14th, 1882. I do not know who the author was, but it had a tremendous effect upon me as a youngster. Young Marine officers in those days could see before their eyes the senior officers' hopeless outlook on life, and though some of those seniors tried to make the best of things before the juniors, several complained openly of their prospects. The first chapter of the extract did not apply to me, as I had passed high on the list for Woolwich, and could have gone there. I wondered whether the other chapters were a forecast of the life to be expected!

#### "ONLY A MARINE!

*"(A short story told by the Corps and not to them.)"*

"CHAPTER I.—He *would* be a soldier. So he went to Sandhurst and was not very lucky, and he went to Woolwich and was rather unfortunate. With a plucking here, and a ploughing there, and everywhere a mishap. But they got him a commission somehow at last, and said he could do no harm—he was only a Marine!

"CHAPTER II.—And he was very devoted to his profession. With a term of service here, and a term of service there, and everywhere a term.

Now he was on land at Portsmouth, now he was at sea in the Pacific Ocean. For years and years and years he knocked about the world. But he did not get promotion—he was only a Marine !

“ CHAPTER III.—Then he thought he would go in for study. So he put his name down for the Staff College. So he wore out his eyes in reading and his brain in learning. With an extra subject here, and a foreign language there, and everywhere a grind. And he worked, and worked, and worked, until he passed. But passing did him no good—he was only a Marine !

“ CHAPTER IV.—Then a war came. And he led a forlorn hope here, and took a fortress there, and everywhere showed heroism. And a shower of rewards and honours fell upon everybody. But not upon him—he was only a Marine !

“ CHAPTER V.—Then he grew grey-headed in the Service. His contemporaries were given good things here, and good things there, and everywhere good things. One commanded a district in the north, and another went to Headquarters in Pall Mall, and a third was quite snug in a nice little office in Ceylon. But he had to keep in his barracks and sail in his ships—he was only a Marine !

“ CHAPTER VI. AND LAST.—And so he grew older and older. And now he began to worry them in Whitehall. So he got an official snubbing here, and an official snubbing there, and everywhere lots of snubs. And he bowed down his silvered old head, and broke his heavy old heart, and laid down his tired old bones, and grieved, and grieved, and grieved until he died. So they cut his epitaph upon his tombstone, and wrote—  
‘ Only a Marine ! ’ ”



## CHAPTER II

### UP THE STRAITS IN THE EIGHTIES

*"The strength of the Ship is the Service: And the strength of the Service the Ship"* (Law of the Navy).

WHEN the Powers that Be invited me to conduct a course of instruction at the Army Staff College with the idea of bringing the Services closer together by teaching them something of each others' ways (on the principle *tout savoir, tout pardonner*) I began by writing up in chalk on the blackboard of my lecture hall the sentences:—

*"What boat are you on?"*

*"Is it a big one?"*

Then I asked the assembled staff officers in embryo to point out three glaring faults in the questions if applied to anyone of the R.N. I hope that my old shipmates in that Service will forgive me for the shudder of discomfort which I know will pass down their spines at seeing such enormities in print. The days have passed away since shore-going folk thought that, because the leviathans of the Mercantile Marine are familiarly called "boats" by their passengers, the term is equally applicable to His Majesty's ships. Many years have passed since the soldier's wife in one of the old Indian troopships, manned by the

Royal Navy, asked the Captain: "Do you think you will ever get a P. and O. Captain?" The story, which was new in the eighties, has now passed into a tradition. Maybe the brotherhood in arms of the R.N. and the Merchant Service in the Great War may lead to the adoption of a common language containing fewer pitfalls for the unwary.

We will take the second question next. We all know the habit of the male of applying the feminine gender to anything for which he as an intimate affection—whether it be aeroplane, motor-car, engine, or any other "inanimate" object with life in it, if I may be permitted such a discrepancy—above all, to describe a ship, which throbs with life and possesses an individuality appreciated best by those who are responsible for handling her. I cannot help quoting here from the naval poet "Klaxon" the following stanza, with the glorious throb of young life in it, written when he transfers to the air machine the feeling of oneness with himself felt by the executive naval officer towards everything which floats under him from the early days when his face was first washed with salt water:

*"The way of a brand-new aeroplane  
On a frosty winter morn :*

"The sun on the fields a mile below is glinting off the grass  
That slides along like a rolling map as under the clouds I pass,  
The early shadows of byre and hedge are dwindling dark  
below

As up the stair of the morning air on my idle wheels I go—  
Nothing to do but to let her alone—she's flying herself to-day,  
Unless I chuck her about a bit—there isn't a bump or sway.

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So *there's* a bank at ninety-five—and *there's* a spin and a spiral dive,

And here we are again.

And *that's* a roll and twist around, and *that's* the sky and *there's* the ground,

And I and the aeroplane

Are doing a glide, but upside-down; and *that's* a village, and *that's* a town—

And now we're rolling back.

And *this* is the way we climb and stall and sit up and beg on nothing at all,

The wires and strainers slack.

And now we'll try and be good some more, and open the throttle and hear her roar,

And steer for London Town.

For there never a pilot yet was born who flew a machine on a frosty morn

But started stunting soon.

To feel if his wires were really there, or whether he flow on ice or air,

Or whether his hands were gloved or bare,

Or he sat in a free balloon."

Note the "she" and the "her." Try to substitute "it" and "it's," and see what a hash you make of the whole verse. But there we have the life all in the man. Now turn to his verse about his ship, for true intimacy and the dual life that is all one. We find the ship given her own individuality, responding to his in a close partnership, and holding converse with him. Here is the verse:

*"The way of a ship at a racing speed  
In a bit of a rising gale :*

"The power and drive beneath me now are above the power of kings,

It's mine the word that lets her loose and in my ear she sings—

‘ Mark now the way I sport and play with the rising hunted  
 sea,  
 Across my grain in cold disdain their ranks are hurled at me.  
 But down my wake is a foam-white lake, the remnant of their  
 line,  
 That broke and died beneath my pride—your foeman, man,  
 and mine.’  
 The perfect tapered hull below is a dream of line and curve,  
 An artist’s vision in steel and bronze for the gods and men to  
 serve.  
 If ever a statue came to life, you quivering slender thing,  
 It ought to be you—my racing girl—as the Amazon song  
 you sing.”

This is the modern spirit, with its inspiration of great speed. In the eighties of the last century movement was more leisurely, but they were days of desperate bodily activity for the seamen—for instance, for the upper-yardmen, who formed a link between the men of the Nelson wars and those, with the same spirit, who have just secured the true freedom of sea and land for all nations whose occasions are lawful. In the days of Nelson, the seamen, by strenuous efforts, increased the speed and handiness in manœuvre of the vessels they manned. In the days when heavy ironclads had masts and yards, the efforts of the seamen might result in a fleet speed of perhaps six knots with a favourable wind, and very little chance of ever reaching a destination without it.

If this meets the eye of any old shipmate who has read the sentences I wrote on the Staff College blackboard, he will be asking the question: “Has he forgotten? And after only about fifteen years ashore?” The answer is: “No, old friend;

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the biggest mistake has been left to the last. It was that word *on* which sent the worst of the shivers down your spine ! ” How can one explain it to anyone without the feeling ? It seems so inadequate to write that the seaman thinks of the deck as the roof of his dwelling-place, while the landsman thinks of it as a floor. Landsmen live *in* houses, not *on* them. Seamen live *in* ships. How often, even nowadays, we hear such questions put to a man in the Navy as, “ What ship are you on now ? ” or, “ On what ship were you serving when I met you at Malta ? ” He is polite to the enquirer, of course, but if you listen carefully you will notice that he answers: “ Oh, I’m in the *Ramillies* now,” or, “ I think I must have been in the *Alexandra* in those days,” with just the least possible stress put on the word *in*. The difference between the “ in ” and the “ on ” shows the whole difference between the mental aspect of the man to whom a ship is a home, of which the deck represents the roof, and that of a visitor who gains his impressions by walking about on that roof.

To the members of her ship’s company one of His Majesty’s ships is a dwelling-place, a home peopled with all sorts and conditions of men who have one deep sentiment in common, a love of the Service, coupled with a determination that H.M.S. —, whatever her name may be, shall be a credit to the traditions of that Service. It can only be compared with the deep feeling felt for the “ shore-going ” home in which one was born and bred. To ask a seaman or marine

what ship he is serving "on" is like asking someone brought up in a happy home what house he lived "on" when he was young. To the seaman, and in the word seaman I should like to include nowadays all "ranks and ratings"—officers, seamen, stokers, artificers, marines, whoever they may be—the ship is first and foremost a home *in* which he lives, a home at its best in blue water. The shores and ports he visits are to him like a moving panorama passing before the windows of his house. The home feeling takes time to develop, as it does on shore, and it can best be acquired in one's youth. Marine officers in my day used to go to sea rather late in life; some never went to a sea-going ship at all until they were majors, and as a result it must be confessed that there was much discontent, amounting in some cases to a violent hatred of service at sea, freely expressed in forcible terms. I had the good luck myself to be sent at the age of twenty-one to what was then looked upon as *the* sea-going ship in the Service, the Flagship of the Mediterranean Fleet, and I joined her in Malta harbour in January, 1883, six months after the bombardment of Alexandria.

Some incidents in the lives of those who go down to the sea in ships stand out in their memory for all time, and joining the first man-of-war to be one's home for a three year commission is one of them. The life of a Marine officer at sea thirty-five years ago was a life of idleness, and this contributed a good deal to the discontent felt by many of them. I can re-

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member at least seven cases of men, who were my contemporaries, some of them excellent officers, going to pieces from sheer want of work and of mental interest. They took to drink, gambled, went off their heads, and, in three of the cases, committed suicide. The policy of the Admiralty in those days is, and was then, beyond my comprehension. In the branch of the R.M. Forces to which I belonged we were put through tremendously stiff courses in mathematics, in science, and in gunnery and torpedo work, in addition to a splendid course of training in discipline and in military subjects, as far as they can be learned academically and by "drill." These courses lasted nearly four years, at a cost to the country which must have amounted to well over £1,000, and then we were sent to sea to do—nothing. The old naval proverb used to run, "Who has the least to do in a ship?" and the answer was, "You might think it was the parson, but it isn't; it is the Major of Marines. The parson has nothing to do; the Major has nothing to do, and two subalterns to help him to do it."

As one of the subalterns, my duties were to be on deck for "Divisions," to fall in, inspect the men, and hear prayers read, and then, unless I was on duty, to do nothing all day excepting on Friday mornings, when we went to General Quarters and drilled at the guns. Sometimes we were landed on some other morning for infantry drill—I am slipping into shore-going language, I mean "forenoon," the "morning" on board His Majesty's ships is over at 8 a.m.—and on

Sundays we inspected the men and then attended Divine Service on the Quarter-deck. We were on duty on alternate days, and duty meant being buttoned up tightly in a full dress tunic, with belts, sword, and helmet, from 9 a.m. until sunset, inspecting the reliefs of sentries every watch, and going round the sentry-posts occasionally by day and by night. If a Flag Officer came on board, or passed the ship with his flag flying, we turned up with the guard and presented arms. These, as far as I can remember, were the whole of my duties while I was on board H.M.S. *Alexandra* for the first three years of my service afloat. As a result, very little memory of the monotonous round of duties at sea has lasted. But the memory of the many happy times and of service friendships remains, also a vivid remembrance of a Soudan campaign.

The *Alexandra*, in her third commission as Flagship of the Mediterranean Fleet, was, first and foremost, what is recognised in the Service by the expression a happy ship. Our Captain was the late "Harry" Rawson, and his face and personality would suffice to make all round him happy under almost any conditions. I believe that a few years afterwards, when he was Commander-in-Chief on the Cape Station, he did wonders in that way during a strenuous and thirsty march with a naval expeditionary force from the coast to the city of Benin. He afterwards was a very popular Governor in Australia, and the hero of the story of the Admiral who reported, on giving up his post, to a Secretary of



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State, and was received with the remark, " Really, Admiral, all the Colonies will be wanting Admirals if they are so popular, and what shall we do then with our professional Governors ? " The Commander was the late Charles Campbell.<sup>1</sup> Both were too exalted in rank to come within the sphere of intimate friendship of a young Marine. Gaps in rank have to be kept wider at sea than on land, because of being constantly thrown together, and this had been impressed on me by a story told me, probably with intent, by an old Lieutenant in the Navy when I was a youngster at Greenwich. Subalterns in the Army are brought up to salute their commanding officers with an affable smile, and say " Good-morning, sir ! " when they first meet them, and the same practice is followed at the Headquarters of the R.M. Forces. Once upon a time a young Marine subaltern went to sea for the first time, and going on deck the first morning (" forenoon," I should have said), spied the Captain walking up and down with his hands behind him. The Captain was walking on the weather side of the deck, reserved by naval tradition for his use. The youth crossed over, walked up to the Captain, smiled nicely, saluted, and said, " Good-morning, sir ! " To which the reply was, " Eh ? " Greeting repeated without smile. " Eh ? " Greeting again repeated, rather tremulously this time. " Is that all ? Get over your own side of the deck." I can't imagine many Captains in my time being

<sup>1</sup> The late Admiral Sir Charles Campbell, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., etc.

quite so brutal, but I think the story is founded on fact.

The first thing taught to the young in the Senior Service is the lesson of the unimportance of the individual, as an individual, and his importance as a part, however small, in a great human assembly, if he resigns himself to that great unwritten law the Custom of the Service. Sooner or later he will rise to the occasion and grasp the Law of the Navy—"On the strength of one link in the cable dependeth the might of the chain. Who knows when thou mayst be tested? So live that thou bearest the strain." Only the links between the hawse-pipe and the water show in the daylight, the rest must be content with obscurity. But to get on with the story.

The thoughts of most who served up the Straits in the eighties centre a good deal round Malta. Excepting during the summer cruises, the Flagship spent most of the year there, tied up to No. 3 Buoy. Malta was, and I believe is, a great place for making lifelong friendships. It would also in those days have been an admirable place for seamen and soldiers to have mixed and got to know more about each other's ways and work; but the seamen then kept up another Nelson tradition. They looked upon themselves as a race apart, spoke a different language from the "shore-going loafer," and maintained an attitude of patronising contempt towards soldiers, while not objecting to chum up occasionally with the men of certain regiments as individuals. Soldiers

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as a class were "grabbies" or "leather-necks." The barrack-square trained soldier of the pipeclay era showed a want of resource under unfamiliar conditions in landing operations, and few seamen realised his marching powers, or the qualities which had given world fame to the "thin red line." The employment of the Navy on transport work, especially the Indian troopships, helped to keep up the silly misunderstandings between the fighting Services. Many of the naval officers of these troopships were disappointed men who had missed promotion and many of the Army officers they carried were very young ones, whose dignity outran their experience, a fatal fault in the eyes of a seaman. There was constant friction, and the old Indian white transports which used to tie up near the Flagship's buoy, and were such a feature of the Grand Harbour of Malta in those times, did much harm in keeping up the traditional friction, constantly referred to by historians of British wars in past centuries. The Indian troopships went by the name of "Lobster-pots" in the Naval Service.

Malta was looked upon generally with affection in the Fleet as a tie with the feminine side of home life. Wives, and sisters, and friends, came out for the winter season. "Their Lordships" of those days wisely objected to visits to the Admiralty by serving officers anxious to obtain or to change appointments. Leave might be granted to those serving on foreign stations only on one condition, rigidly enforced, that the applicant promised not to go to England. The

result was good from the point of view of the country. There was little diversion of energy from the Service, or from the home life of the ship.

So we started our family life in the Wardroom of the *Alexandra* in January, 1883, with the prospect of making her our home for three years. I missed the first three months or so, being laid up all alone in a big infectious ward, containing seventy beds, in the R.N. Hospital at Bighi—scarlet-fever, caught in the carnival crowd in the streets of Valetta. I remember a visit the day before my illness to the sweet shop in Valetta called the "Sick Man," where rich and fascinating forms of nougat were sold, and finding, to my horror, that my disease was diagnosed on the hospital report as "surfeit of confectionery." The story got about, and earned me the nickname of "Chilo," which stuck to me for the commission and for many years afterwards. I escaped from quarantine just in time for a cruise round the Adriatic. Impressions of that cruise and those of following years have only left dim memories of slow movement through summer seas, and a constantly changing panorama of coast-lines and places visited. Seeing the world from a home in one of Her Majesty's ships was a form of travel unlike all others. Impressions of beautiful scenery remain, but few impressions of foreign peoples. The pose of the seaman was to recognise the national individuality of Frenchmen only, all other foreigners were described collectively as "Portuguese." We have travelled quite a long way in our knowledge since then. I should not be

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surprised to find that, even in England, quite a large proportion of the important folk who use, in democratic parlance, the phrase "self-determination on the basis of nationality," and perhaps as many as five per cent. amongst their audiences, now know the difference between a Czecho-Slovak and a Jugo-Slav. A few incidents of the cruises stand out; impressions of the beauty of the Dalmatian Coast, where Jugo-Slavs are to be found, and the hospitality and friendliness of the inhabitants of the various nationalities. Either at Pola or Fiume, an enormous laurel wreath came off in a shore-boat, with long white silk streamers, inscribed, "To the Lord Hay (*sic*), and the crews of the *Alexandra* and *Temeraire*, heroes of the bombardment of Alexandria!" The senders did not realise that we had few such heroes on board, because the ship had recommissioned, but they meant it kindly. The good feeling of the coastal population towards the British Navy could not have been only on the surface, it was still there thirty years later, and survived the Great War. When a British destroyer put into Fiume harbour during the Armistice days (November, 1918) she was greeted by cheering crowds, denser, and even more enthusiastic than those who followed us during the summer cruises in the "eighties." I have a vivid memory of one afternoon when we were greeted wherever we went by the sound of our National Anthem, and we had to keep our hats off for nearly four hours. It seems a strange world in which people with a sincere mutual regard are constrained to

slaughter each other at the behest of their rulers, or at the bidding of some polysyllabic phrase with an obscure meaning !

After the Adriatic cruise, and a week or two at Malta to refit, came an autumn cruise in the Aegean, with views of the beautiful outlines of the Greek Islands, and glorious sunsets and atmospheric effects. A visit to Smyrna, with a first experience of the sights, sounds, and smells of the East. Strings of laden camels padding their way through narrow streets. Bazaars, where the purchase of a towel was an exciting game lasting three days, instead of a commercial transaction lasting three minutes. An impression that we had stepped into a former century, when we heard that only a day or two before a band of brigands had carried off two boys, and, when the father could not pay the ransom (£200) demanded, but only £100, they had sent back one of his sons, killing the other. Then to many places of which the names had been familiar at a classical school, left only a few years before. At Athens I remember my surprise at seeing shop signs and notices written up in Greek characters. The impression conveyed vaguely to my mind at a public school had been that the Greeks, if they ever existed at all, lived in quite a different world, where their descendants no longer exist; but a trip from Argos to the ruins at Mycene produced the impression that perhaps, after all, the Greek language was not invented purely for the annoyance of public school-boys.

After the Levant cruise we returned to Malta,

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and settled down there for the winter; we gave a children's party at Christmas, at which we had a Punch and Judy show made entirely on board, and followed it up by a weekly afternoon dance. At one of those dances news arrived of the disaster to Baker Pasha's army of Egyptians in the Soudan; it was said that the Egyptian garrison of a desert post at Tokar was in danger, that even Suakin itself might soon be threatened, and the Marines of the Mediterranean Fleet were to be sent at once to join an army from Egypt to deal with the emergency.

That was a sudden plunge from social frivolities into a great experience. I pass over the few hours of blank disappointment when we heard that, though all the men excepting those employed as officers' servants were to go, and the seamen were to do the guard duties usually performed by Marines, many of the officers were to remain behind in their ships. I was amongst the chosen few who left in the *Hecla* for Port Said at day-break next morning, or soon after. Captain A. K. Wilson (now Admiral of the Fleet Sir A. K. Wilson, V.C., G.C.B.) was her captain. We gathered that he meant to be in it somehow when he said good-bye to us at Port Said, where we were transferred to the *Orontes*, a naval transport. The *Hecla's* first orders were not to pass Port Said. We next saw her in the Red Sea, with camels on her deck, towing a string of large floating water-tanks; and I next saw Captain Wilson, as he then was, walking across the desert with his coxswain towards the sound of the



PUNCH AND JUDY SHOW, H.M.S. "ALEXANDRA," 1883.  
Lieut. The Hon. Maurice Bourke, R.N., and Lieut. G. G. Aston, R.M.A.

*Facing page 36.*





guns of the battle of El Teb, where he won his well-earned V.C. by holding with his fists a dangerous corner against an Arab rush after having broken his sword.

After picking her way through coral reefs, showing clearly near the surface, the *Orontes* anchored off a featureless shore at Trinkitat. It was the place where the surviving remnants of Baker's army had embarked not many days before, and a few traces of their recent presence were to be seen when we landed to look round. The chief feature of the landscape was a dead camel, with a few vultures round it, and beyond that a wide expanse of desert sand ending in quivering mirage, looking to the uninitiated like lakes in which overhanging trees were reflected.

That particular camel figured in our first experience of a regrettable incident, one of those minor ones that happen so often in all wars, but are seldom reported. At sunset, about two companies from one of the best battalions in the Army were landed to guard the piers which had been made by us during the day to be used for landing stores. There is no twilight in those parts, and darkness came when only a few of the men had landed. They were in a land of mystery, of which they had no daylight knowledge. They put out the usual line of outpost sentries. At about 1.30 a.m. we heard from our transport the sound of heavy firing on shore. For about half an hour we thought that a battle was raging. We heard after sunrise what had really happened: one of the sentries had caught

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sight of the dead camel, which seemed to be creeping up to him. He could stand the strain no longer, and opened fire. The picket ran to support him and did the same, and nearly the whole force followed their example. It was our first night experience of the sort, but we had many more afterwards, with greater or less reason.

During the days following the expeditionary force was landed, including our battalion, which had been reinforced at Port Said by some Royal Marines who were on their way home after many years service on the China Station, chiefly in small gunboats. We mustered about 700 in all, with only six officers instead of about four times the number, so life was fairly strenuous for the six. A few more joined later, including Colonel Tuson,<sup>1</sup> who came out from England to command us, bringing Captain Poë<sup>2</sup> as Adjutant. The truth is, that we were rather helpless in looking out for our own comfort. Our military training had been carried out on a barrack-square, or the similar parade-ground at Corradino, overlooking the Grand Harbour at Malta. We had no officers' mess, equipment, or stores. We were dressed in tight blue uniform, with heavy, uncomfortable helmets of a foolish shape, pressing on the temples, and giving no shelter to vital spots from the sun. We had always worn thin Wellington boots with our uniform, and had been obliged to fall back on the stiff hard leather "ammunition boots,"

<sup>1</sup> The late General Sir H. B. Tuson, K.C.B.

<sup>2</sup> Sir W. H. Poë, Bt., C.B.

commonly called "Pusser's crabs," which we managed to draw in our ships. Our feet were unaccustomed to them, and few of us had learned the trick of soaping socks to avoid sore feet. The men wore heavy buff leather (pipeclayed) equipment, with stiff shiny black pouches to carry their ammunition. They could only open the covers of the pouches with great difficulty when lying down to fire, and much of the ammunition fell out when they got up. The haversacks were made of thin linen, easily worn through by their contents, and, worst of all, the water-bottles were small wooden ones of inferior design, with a very small hole for filling—and that in a thirsty desert! The water had to be supplied from condensing ships, and was pumped through pipes to canvas tanks on shore, where it evaporated rapidly. It was generally warm, and had a flat and rather oily taste. We had no transport, but a few water-carts and ammunition mules were lent us by the Army. The general impression of those Tokar operations, working from Trinkitat as a base, is one of thirst; we had only two pints of water per head per day when we went into the desert, marching in square, and getting the full benefit of the dust raised; and sometimes the stage of thirst was reached when the tongue swells and seems to close up your throat, and then cracks and bleeds. The two pints, allowing for spilling and evaporation, were nearly all used up in cooking and the making of tea or cocoa. Washing was not, as a rule, possible. About that more anon.

The Tokar Campaign, which resulted in the

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battle of El Teb, followed the lines of all desert campaigns before the invention of aeroplanes and motor-cars. You could not possibly carry with your force all the water, supplies, and ammunition required for protracted operations, that would be a physical impossibility. So you sent what you wanted on ahead with as small as possible an escort to defend it; if the escort was too large it would consume the supplies before the main body came up; if too small, the enemy would probably get the supplies. When you had established big enough depots on ahead, the force was sent forward in the hope of bringing off a decisive battle. Our object in February, 1884, was the relief of the Egyptian garrison at Tokar. The march was too long for one day, but could be done in two, so we formed one forward depot at a place we called Fort Baker, where Baker's force had made some fortifications. I was given charge of some Krupp guns to be mounted in the fort, and took one of them forward. No less than eighty men were needed to drag it through a sort of salt marsh that lay between Trinkitat and Fort Baker, but we got it there somehow.

Near Fort Baker I came across my first—and worst—experience of war. Old battle-fields are a feature of the Soudan desert, but they are generally indicated by clean skulls and bones lying about in the sand. This one was not many days old. Clouds of vultures, flying up a short distance and resettling amongst others too gorged to move, were the first indication. Then a line of corpses, all lying on their faces, speared in the

back, and for the most part transfixed with wooden stakes, the line leading from great heaps of men and transport animals, the remnants of Baker's force, which had failed to stand in square when changed by large masses of Hadendowa Arabs. It was not an object for close investigation. When the heat mirage cleared, some of the enemy showed occasionally amongst the thorn-bushes in the distance, one fine-looking Arab on a white horse waving defiance. They were just within gun range, and a few rounds dispersed them.

Soon the whole force arrived under the command of Sir Gerald Graham, and after spending one night in bivouac outside Fort Baker they marched forward at daybreak on February 29th to fight the battle of El Teb. It was my lot to watch that battle, or as much of it as could be seen in the mirage, through a telescope. The co-operation of my guns might have been required if everything had not gone as well as was expected. The Cavalry and Mounted Infantry led the way, and amongst the former the 10th Hussars were conspicuous—the officers in khaki tunics, gold-laced riding-breeches, gold and silver belts, and helmets with tall brass spikes and chains. The regiment, on its way home from India, was taken out of transports, and mounted on small Egyptian horses. Amongst the subalterns I remember Julian Byng, the Commander of the celebrated Third Army on the Western Front in 1917-18. My knowledge of the battle of El Teb is only second-hand, so I will not try to describe it, but one incident may be worth repeating.

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The enemy unexpectedly opened fire upon our force with field guns. It fell to the lot of our battalion to take these guns. Colonel Burnaby, of "Ride to Khiva" fame, had been in front of our men, using a shot-gun loaded with slugs, during the advance. He was amongst the first to reach the guns, and was sitting on one of them examining his bare arm when our senior major came up. Burnaby called to him. "Look at that arm!" Not noticing a hole in it, which Burnaby was disposed to attribute to a Martini bullet fired by one of our men, the Major answered: "Very fine arm, sir!"

The wounded, with Baker Pasha and Burnaby, began to arrive at Fort Baker in the evening, with an escort of 10th Hussars. We heard the story of the charge by the 10th and 19th Hussars, and the difficulty in reaching the enemy, whose tactics were to lie flat on the ground and slash at the horses with knives as they passed. "Monty" Slade in the 10th was killed, his horse being brought down in that way. Sword-cuts did little damage to the shields, made of thick hide, which the Arabs held in the left hand. I have one of these shields as an example with the shallow mark of a cut in it, and heard of several picked up with revolver bullets lodged in them. In the evening of that day I remember an incident that may help to give an idea of life without water. One of my men brought me a message to say that the R.E. corporal had secured some washing water, and "Would we like to have some?" Soon after he brought over a small bit of looking-glass and a tiny

basin of thick liquid looking like pea-soup. This made shaving possible, at all events; but before I could finish my corporal came up and saluted. "Beg pardon, sir, but the men say would you please not splash the water as they would like to have a rub at it." When about six of them had used it a message came from the R.E. to ask if we had finished with their water yet !

Tokar was relieved the next day, and our battalion came back to Fort Baker. On the day following we marched to Trinkitat, and embarked in the *Humber* for Suakin. The *Humber* was provided with a bathroom and an ice-chest. Some people say, "Blessed are they that expect nothing, for they shall not be disappointed." I think they are wrong. I can only say that I enjoyed over and over again in the desert the idea of sitting in a warm bath holding a compound containing a pint of champagne, two bottles of soda-water, a bit of ice tinkling against the glass, and possibly a slice of lemon. That ambition was fulfilled by some of us in the *Humber* before we arrived at Suakin for the advance on Tamaai. There are moments in life when economy is misplaced.



## CHAPTER III

### UP THE STRAITS IN THE EIGHTIES (*Continued*)

*"On the strength of one link in the cable dependeth the might of the chain.*

*Who knows when thou mayst be tested? So live that thou bearest the strain"* (Law of the Navy).

THE two features of Suakin that I remember best are the comfort of the tents and the horror of the flies, which settled in clouds on our food. We had to brush them off each morsel on its way from plate to mouth. The Navy had pitched a camp for us, and the tents were Indian, of the E.P. (European private) pattern, large square double tents, the outer cover lined with red cotton and the inner with yellow, pole standards and ridge-poles of bamboo, and a door in each side with light bamboo rods to hold up the flap and form a porch. We spent a few days in comfort in these cool tents and then marched into the desert for our next great adventure, which came very near to disaster. What the real object of the expedition was we had no idea; we thought that we should ultimately march inland, open up the country, and establish communication with Berber on the Nile, so as to use that route for reinforcing or relieving General Gordon at Khartoum in the event of his wanting support. We had killed about

2,000 of the local Arab tribesmen at El Teb, and we had relieved the Egyptian garrison at Tokar. We had been told at first that that was the principal object of the campaign.

At Suakin, as at Trinkitat, all our drinking-water came from condensing ships in the harbour. The local well-water was brackish and unfit for the white man, though the natives drank it without harm. We followed the usual ~~plan~~ plan in desert warfare in those days: we established a depot for supplies and water a day's march from Suakin, and as soon as enough water had been collected in canvas tanks we started on our march at once, so as to get to them before their precious contents evaporated. We marched in square, with guns and pack transport on mules and camels in the middle of the square. We had to be ready for attack from any direction at any moment. Cavalry scouts were out, but they could not be pushed very far, and the line of march took us through thorn-bush with occasional wide open spaces. We halted in the afternoon, made a zareba (a hedge of thorn-bush) around us, and settled down for the night. I remember the fascination when tired out of being saved the tedious process of undressing, and simply lying down to rest in the soft sand, with brilliant stars overhead, and the desert silence, broken only by the occasional grunt or snarl of a camel. We started early the next morning to get some of the march over in the cool hours, halted for a midday rest, and after a thirsty afternoon march through a desert quivering with heat, settled down for the second night in another

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zareba. We strengthened our hedge with all the thorn-bush we could cut before dark, as we gathered that the enemy was somewhere about us. A big convoy with water-tins and supplies came crowding into our zareba soon after dark, and the turmoil of snarling camels left us little chance of sleep until midnight.

About an hour later we were awakened by the sound of bullets whistling overhead and pattering on the camel saddles. One went through our Major's horse, by which I was sleeping. I also heard for the first time that queer sort of lingering moan familiar to all who have been in night alarms in desert war. The men were lying along the sides of the zareba with sentries every few yards, and heavy firing at nothing in particular was at once opened from some parts of the square. There was a scramble for the piled arms, and the thorn hedges were soon manned. There were no further developments that night. The sniping went on for a time, but we managed to get one or two hours' sleep. The next day—March 13th—we fought the battle of Tamaai.

We were up before dawn, and I must confess that we did not earn Rudyard Kipling's opinion of the resourcefulness of our Corps. We were not fed "before the bugles blew." We had been unable to beg, borrow, or steal any proper camp kettles. The ones we had managed to secure were native cooking-pots, made of thick metal; they needed a furnace to warm them through properly. Sticks of dry thorn-bush were of little use as fuel, even when reinforced by the empty

boxes left ungarded by the General's Headquarters, and "found" by our cooks. The result was that we began our day's work on nothing more sustaining than tepid water and coffee-grits, and some dry biscuit. Even after thirty-five years the events of the next few hours stand out very clearly. We formed the rear face and part of the right face of the square. The 42nd (Black Watch) and 65th (York and Lancaster) formed the other faces. The rear face of a square on the move is the least enviable position. It is no joke plodding in heavy marching order through clouds of dust in tight-fitting blue clothing attracting the full heat of the sun, especially when your head-covering is unsuitable and uncomfortable. It adds to your discomfort when progress is constantly obstructed by the tail ends of mules, constantly straggling from the mass inside the square, carrying loads of ammunition, water (very little of that), and medical stores. We had left our other supplies behind in the zareba, with a small guard.

When we had marched a short distance we halted, formed up the square ready for action, and lay down for a few minutes' rest. Then we advanced by bugle. The use of bugles to convey orders was universal in those days; bugle-calls preceded every operation, and advertised its nature to any enemy with the most primitive ear for music. As soon as we advanced again bullets from Remington rifles began to drop amongst us. The enemy's conception of musketry was primitive. The average Hadendowa Arab rested the butt of his rifle on his thigh, with the muzzle at any

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convenient angle, and then pulled the trigger. A square of men in solid formation, the front and rear faces marching shoulder to shoulder, and those of the side faces in fours, offers a simple target at a few hundred yards, but most of the bullets hummed harmlessly overhead. The rear face received a small share of them. A medical officer riding on a mule just in front of me was shot, the bullet entering one temple and going out at the other. He put his hands to his head, called out that he was dead, and rolled off his mule. It was a natural impression on his part; his brain was badly shaken up, and a mess had been made of his eyesight; but the bystanders only seemed to see the incident from the humorous point of view. It was really rather a wonderful escape, the bullet ran round the skin under his eyebrows without penetrating his skull. Then another bullet hit the butt of the rifle of a young soldier, who gave a little jump afterwards every time one whizzed fairly close overhead. The remark of the old soldier next to him who felt the little jerks of his elbow is worth recording: "All right, Bill! You won't hear the one that hits you!"

A few minutes later the battle began in earnest. We seem suddenly to have blundered on to the edge of a deep nullah, with steep sides. Another smaller nullah, with more gentle slopes and plenty of bush cover, ran into the main nullah just to the right of the square. From these nullahs a mass of anything up to 8,000 spearmen and swordsmen rushed out. A large body got through a gap in the right face, swept along the whole of the rear

of the front face, killing all the company sergeants and about eighty men (the officers of the front face were in front of the line, as the order has been given to charge). It was impossible to shoot inwards at an enemy inside the square, and the men, much hampered by their equipment, had to resort to the *arme blanche* against agile naked spearmen who were experts in its employment. On the right, outside the square, we had a field battery (naval muzzle-loading 9-pounder guns, drawn by mules, and manned by the R.F.A.), and some naval (Gardner) machine-guns inside the square, where the field battery joined them after firing a few rounds. About a mile away, to our right, was another brigade square, commanded by Redvers Buller; on our left a squadron of the 10th Hussars, watching the flank.

I will give my own view of events. After a few steady volleys we heard a terrific burst of rifle and machine-gun fire in front. Through the dust and heat haze and screen of mules and transport we saw a few fuzzy heads, and the glint of spear-points occasionally appeared over the low scrub. Then a steady stream of transport animals came at us. Then men of all units, mixed up in little mobs plodding steadily to the rear, without panic, but with all organisation and control lost. They came upon us so suddenly that there was no chance of altering our formation, which left no gaps to let the procession through. We were in line, in two ranks, and many of our men were soon mixed up with the others in the retreat. In some parts of the line one of our few officers, or an N.C.O.,

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formed what was then called a "rallying square" of a few men. These "prepared for cavalry," which meant forming in clusters with rear ranks standing and front ranks on the knee, each little human buttress bristling with bayonets. The last men to retire looked over their shoulders and took pot-shots at anything looking like an enemy. The final stage of what might have been a big disaster was a steady walk to the rear by the whole disorganised mob, which a few minutes before had been a disciplined brigade. After all organisation was lost I remember the maddening feeling of being unable to regain control. The men seemed dazed and incapable of grasping any idea but that of walking steadily to the rear. It seemed to be impossible to stop the movement. Once the retreat was stopped, there might be a chance to reform the brigade. Then I learned the value of *esprit de corps*, and the old discipline and sense of obedience instilled by barrack-square drill. The Major<sup>1</sup> whose horse had been shot in the zareba during the night was the fortunate possessor of a voice like a bull. He roared out an appeal to the *esprit de corps* of the Portsmouth men of the Royal Marines to rally round him. At last some men stopped, and, seeing them do so, others followed the example. The advance of the enemy was delayed for the time by cross-fire across our front from a squadron of 10th Hussars who had dismounted on our left, and, to some extent by the distant fire of the other square on our right. We had leisure to re-form, and disaster was averted.

<sup>1</sup> The late General G. H. T. Colwell, C.B.

Officers gradually took charge and divided up the men in companies, regardless of the corps to which they belonged. We formed a line, one rank in some places, as many as six ranks in others, but all recognising some form of command. Many men of other branches of the service, Highlanders, York and Lancaster men, and bluejackets, were still mixed up in our ranks, but these gradually passed to their own commands. I estimated at the time that we must have fallen back about half a mile.

Then came the order to advance in line and retake the ground we had lost. We could see a few of the enemy to our front, and the artillery from our right threw a few shells amongst them. One shell bowled over a triumphant Hadendowa dancing on a captured limber and waving defiance at us. We marched on without incident over the debris of the retreat and the British and Haden-dowa dead (we found no British wounded alive) until we were again near the nullah. My company was on the extreme right, near the small side nullah, at the bottom of which was lying one of our lost machine-guns. A very gallant sub-lieutenant in the Navy, with a party of blue-jackets, ran down to save it, and as they were dragging it away they were followed up by a body of spearmen and swordsmen coming up from the main nullah. The men of my company opened fire to protect their shipmates. The other, unbroken, square was exactly in the line of fire! We stopped the firing as soon as we could, but the incident nearly ended tragically for myself.



A very angry man turned up soon afterwards from the other square with a bullet hole through one of his horse's ears. He selected me as the object of his wrath, and as there was nothing on him to show that he was an officer I mistook him for a war correspondent, and replied in a similar strain, indicating a place hotter than the Suakin desert as his destination. One of our Majors came up to see what it was all about, and, to my dismay, called him "Sir." The Chief of the Staff (Colonel Clery) arrived and did the same. The justly annoyed man was Redvers Buller, commander of the other brigade, and I thought that my career in the Service was at an end. I was told quietly next day by Colonel Clery that the Powers were quite satisfied with my conduct! Nearly twenty years afterwards a fellow-student at the Staff College dragged up the story with the question, "Who shot Buller's horse?" during a discussion on savage warfare, from which I gather that the tale spread in the Army. When we were near the edge of the big nullah we were charged again, but not in great force. I shall never forget the gallantry of the "Fuzzies," or their wonderful vitality; nothing seemed to stop them when once on the move in a charge. We all had the greatest admiration for them, and we would have welcomed some explanation to the lower ranks about why we were sent into their country to kill them. Once there, of course it was a question of their lives or ours. Their men's notion of war was embodied in the idea of clean killing. I think various material delights were promised to every man in Paradise

if he succeeded in killing a Christian. There was none of the quality of the Prussian, who, according to Goethe and to our own experience, is naturally cruel. "Civilisation," Goethe added, "will make him a savage." It has. I should be sorry to call the Hadendowa Arab of those days a savage; but we had a horror of the ways of his womenkind. They hid in the bushes with short knives of unpleasant form to despatch and mutilate any enemy who fell into their hands.

The last charge against us from the nullah was stopped by rifle and machine-gun fire. In my immediate front the enemy's leading man dropped about thirty yards from our bayonets. He had received four mortal body wounds and one through the head. He still tried to struggle forward to reach us when no longer able to stand. Then we soon saw the enemy going homewards in twos and threes up the other side of the nullah, and the long strain was over. We were nearly choking with thirst, aggravated by the dust and the pungent fumes of powder smoke, but there was no water. Strangely enough, there was plenty of ice for the sick, and we were all given blocks of it. We found that it was nearly four o'clock in the afternoon.

After taking the precaution of clearing the bush and rocky ground at the bottom of the nullah (my company was used for the purpose; it was rather "jumpy" work) we went back to the zareba, had our first meal, and slept alongside the long rows of our dead brought in from the battle-field. We buried them in a long trench early the next morning, and then went back to Suakin by a

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forced march, so as to get there before our water-supply ran out. It was a terribly thirsty march, especially for men who drank from their water-bottles early in the day, as men will when they have not learned by experience.

The remainder of our time at Suakin calls for little comment. We had another and longer march across the desert to the foothills, but no action resulted, and we marched home again. There were rumours that the cavalry were to push across the desert to Berber on the Nile. They were soon contradicted. The newspaper correspondents left us and we realised then that our work was over. Then came the scourge of enteric, and the sound of three volleys coming from the cemetery every afternoon. The force was embarked as quickly as possible, and we were nearly the last to leave. I think that our transport must have been used for pilgrim traffic. A party of eighty men working for two days only succeeded in cleaning the filth out of the cabins, saloon, and one troop deck, and the holds were still in a disgusting state when we left for Suez, the Canal, and Malta. Many men went down with enteric during the voyage, and some died.

Looking back at memories of the Soudan campaign of 1884, the two that stand out most vividly are that weird sort of moan that arose from the zareba during the night alarm before Tamaai, and the most exciting event of the next day's battle. When we were advancing in line to retake the lost ground a startled hare raced across our front, I think that at least a thousand

men must have fired at it, and I remember breathless excitement about whether it would escape. It did, apparently untouched.

Many years afterwards it fell to my lot to try in a course of lectures to teach young subalterns their duties on active service. They had to acquire a mass of book knowledge for examination purposes, but I summed up the lessons gathered from my own experience very shortly. (1) Think of your men before you think of yourself. (2) Eat, drink, and sleep whenever you get a chance if you want to stay the course. And (3) Grease your boots. I might have added one more point to the inexperienced: "funk" on active service is generally being afraid of being afraid, and the cure for that fear is a job of work and some responsibility, even as the best cure for sea-sickness is to steer the boat. For a few minutes after waking up for the night alarm before Tamaai I was under the impression that I was an abject coward, until my C.O. sent me out, all alone, into the bullet-swept darkness to investigate a native who had charged towards the zareba when the sniping began, and had apparently fallen dead about sixty yards outside the line. It was quite an effective cure.

The return to our ships in Malta harbour was a very pleasant home-coming. I am afraid that we had but little sense of proportion in the Services in those days; we were received as heroes after our six weeks' campaign. The Captains in the Fleet manned a galley and pulled our C.O. across the Grand Harbour, and the Flagship's wardroom

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officers gave a dinner in our honour, at which I think everyone at the table either made a speech or sang a song. We got back just in time for the summer cruise, and we visited many interesting parts of the Mediterranean during that and subsequent cruises; the notes of them which follow are not in consecutive order, as I kept no diaries in those days.

Alexandria was interesting, especially the batteries knocked about by the recent bombardment, the luxurious suburb with the irrigated gardens of the rich merchant's houses, and the masses of flowering oleanders. We once carried from Alexandria to Port Said two companies of the Cameron Highlanders, in those days the most friendly regiment of all others with the Navy. We took them to the "Dutch House" at the entrance to the Canal, and saw a good deal of them afterwards, as we spent several months at Port Said at one time and another. It was not a very desirable spot just then. I remember best the coal-dust, and the porpoises in the harbour; picnics in the wardroom skiff to gather rock oysters from the outside of the breakwater; shooting when the quail came in, and marvelling at the fact that although they arrived in the last stage of exhaustion and starvation it seemed to take only an hour or two for them to become as fat as butter by feeding in the irrigated cultivated ground east of the Canal; duck shooting, or, rather, lying out for them on the beach and watching them pass along in thousands at sea just out of gunshot (to our great joy we succeeded

in inducing a newly joined and delightful, but very gullible, doctor to spend a long hot day with a gun in search of "Bombay ducks" in the desert); the wonderful sight of flamingos rising in white clouds, flashing into pale pink as they turned over the lake in the distance. Those were the pleasing prospects. Man in Port Said in its earlier days provided vileness in abundance. The European quarter abounded in drinking dens, café chantants with gambling saloons attached, and such-like resorts. We gave "general leave" from the ship there once, and general leave, in those days, meant paying arrears of pay and sending ashore men who had been boxed up on board their ships for anything up to three months because, for love of drink or for other reasons, they had formed the habit of out-staying their leave when it was granted; some of them were the best working hands in the ship, but a visit to the shore was generally too much for them. Port Said abounded in the sellers of fiery fluids, of which one glass was enough for the strongest head. On one occasion there was the making of an ugly row; the "liberty men" had landed early in the afternoon, and I was sent with a sergeant and six of my men, as an advanced guard of the naval picket, to keep order. The first thing we saw on landing was a big mob fighting in the main street; in the middle were two bluejackets, with whom the crowd seemed to have some difference of opinion, as they were stripped half naked, and covered with blood. The nearest café had been denuded of its con-

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tents, chiefly chairs, which were broken up for use as weapons. The effect of a disciplined body of even six men upon the situation was rather interesting; the obvious thing to do was to get the victims from the mob by orderly methods before their sympathising shipmates found a leader and increased the turmoil. My little picket was standing rigidly "at ease"; the sergeant, a fine Scotsman called Mackenzie, who had done well at El Teb, and had learned a lesson in handling a confused situation at Tamaai, called out: "T'shun ! Right turn ! Left wheel ! Quick march !" — marched straight through the mob, surrounded the two bluejackets, took them to the boat, fell his men in again, and stood them solemnly at ease before the mob seemed to realise what had happened. Things still looked a bit ugly, and a few knives were to be seen. The Governor of Port Said was very excited, and feared trouble, so I got together as many "liberty-men" as possible (there were two or three hundred on shore), and told them that I had orders to send them off to the ships at once, passing the word quietly to some of the choicest spirits—"if I can find you." In five minutes there was not a man to be seen. The aftermath was an attempt to make of their doings an incident of International importance; the European Press was full of accounts—what we have now learned to call "propaganda"—about a rising of the Egyptians against the British. Port Said was then a sort of sink for the human dregs of the Levant; there were no Egyptians there except a few officials and police.

During a subsequent cruise along the Syrian coast a party of fifty-two from the Fleet rode from Joppa (where I first saw a turtle swimming in the sea) to Jerusalem. We all rode excepting the Admiral and his Secretary, who drove in a carriage-and-pair; there was no railway in those days. During that tour I remember an evening on the Mount of Olives, with Jerusalem outlined against the sunset on one side, and on the other a bleak view of the Dead Sea, far away in the distance in its deep valley below the level of the Mediterranean. We had some trouble in shaking off our guide, who was anxious that we should spend our few hours in hurrying about seeing sights, instead of in quietly gathering impressions, and thinking. One of the sights offered (for a franc) was a view of Adam's skull, warranted genuine!

The Mosque of Omar impressed us with the beauty and grand simplicity of the great dome built over a simple rock, left untouched and impressive. Of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, in comparison, the less said the better. We were interested by the Jews' wailing place, and the huge stone of the old wall there. Most of the party rode to Bethlehem the day after we arrived, but as the same horses had to take us back to Joppa (forty miles) the next night, I thought it better to spare mine the extra distance, of about twenty-four miles, as far as I can remember. It was a little hard, when I went to visit my horse resting and having an extra feed, as I hoped, to find that a shipmate had ridden off on him



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with the party to Bethlehem. The endurance and surefootedness of the Syrian horses provided by Thos. Cook and Sons were rather wonderful. We covered much of the way home at a hand gallop, midshipmen leading, by night, over a rocky road, and we rode into Joppa early on a Sunday morning.

Sunday forenoons on board a man-of-war are always impressive, when once you have got over the ordeal of the Captain's inspection. The wonderful rolling prose of the Prayer for Those at Sea is best heard on a ship's deck, from a speaker whose surplice is fluttering in a sea breeze; and the hymn beginning "Eternal Father" is best heard, in the same setting, from hundreds of the deep bass voices of seamen. I think our trip to Jerusalem put all of us better in tune than usual with such impressions that morning.

Afterwards we went to Beirut, but the trip to Baal-Bek and Damascus was beyond the resources of a subaltern's pockets, severely strained by the Jerusalem expedition. My mess-bill that month was discharged by the help of a loan from a kind-hearted Paymaster, to whom I hereby tender my sincere thanks, if he still lives. No doubt things are different now, but I doubt whether the Great Ones who then decided financial questions at the Admiralty were gifted with the precious quality of imagination. Certain moneys, only a few pounds, but a big sum for subalterns trying to live on their pay, which was little more than half that of their wardroom messmates, were granted

by circular to all who had been at Suakin after a specified date, a few days before we left that place. We drew the money, and spent it. Then we were told it was a mistake, and we had to pay up; that meant nearly a whole month's pay lost, and a mess-bill to meet. Adverse reports and similar terrors, perhaps even courts-martial in aggravated cases, hang over the heads of those who fail to pay their mess-bills in the Service.

The resulting shortage of money made trips inland out of the question for the remainder of the commission, and sometimes it was tantalising to be near world-famed spots without seeing them; but, nevertheless, there was much to be seen for nothing, and I look back at those times as a wonderful yachting trip at the country's expense, taken in the company of the very best companions any youth could desire. It seems, at this interval, like a kaleidoscopic panorama of interesting places and good times spent in them, looking on all the scenes as a play, without gathering any knowledge of the real life of the actors, and it would not be difficult, even now, to write a long account of the different scenes if I were not afraid of becoming tedious. Perhaps a few short notes may be of sufficient interest.

Following the coast round from Beirut, we saw Budrum with its ancient grey castle (that was before it was whitewashed), on which we found some old English arms of the Crusaders carved in stone; Limasol, in Cyprus, and the lovely experience of reaching the pine-woods and snow of Mount Troodos, after a stiflingly hot ride on a

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mule through miles and miles of vineyards stretching up from the sun-baked plain; on the way back we learned the importance of a crupper on the saddle of a riding-mule for a ride down-hill (I had to tie my saddle to the mule's tail with a pocket-handkerchief to prevent it from slipping forward); then Chesmeh, not far from Smyrna, where we experienced the strange sensation of an earthquake as felt from a ship in harbour—it was a queer sort of wavy shivering feeling in the deck, lasting about fifteen seconds, and the men, who were out on the yards at sail drill, were called down from aloft, as we did not know what might come next; the British Vice-Consul, who was visiting us, went through the trying experience of seeing his house rocking, and part of it falling; then there were long walks ashore over various islands, chasing red-legged partridges, without much result from those who had not studied their habits in hot climates in different times of the day; Salonika, with its big Jewish colony, dating from before the Christian era, when “a synagogue of the Jews” was to be found there—I then met for the first time the red-haired Jewish type; then Athens; the hot dusty drive along a glaring road from the harbour of Phalerum; the Temples of Theseus and Jupiter; and, above all, the Acropolis, seen by moonlight; Mars Hill (or rather hillock), where St. Paul stood to explain immortality to the Athenians, who in those days “spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or hear some new thing.” The news was evidently too startling at the time for the majority

to accept, "Demetrius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris" being the only named exceptions.

Then Zante, with its curious "pitch well" bubbling up through water; Argostoli, where the sea runs into the earth, always in the same direction, turning a water-mill; Misolonghi, with its reminiscences of Byron; Corfu, with all its beauties of olive groves and dark cypresses. In all the Ionian Islands the old British barracks were still standing, not even a new coat of paint since the occupation—inscriptions such as "W.O. Quarters" still remained over the doors; Avlona Bay, with its excellent little trout stream, whipped by rods of all sizes from eight feet to eighteen during our stay (a little red on the fly was a *sine qua non*, the size did not seem to matter). We had rather an amusing experience there; finding so many keen fishermen in the fleet, the Admiral kindly took us all for a picnic in his yacht and anchored some miles from the bay by the town of Avlona (Valona), so that we could get to a larger river marked inland on the chart. To reach it we rode on Turkish packsaddles (the initiated will sympathise) for about eight miles, on a blazing hot day with heat-waves striking upwards off the glaring ground. The river looked perfect, and very trouty; we spread ourselves at intervals of about fifty yards, and put our rods up and started work. We flogged for an hour with no result; then some thoughtful investigator put his finger in the river and sucked it. The water was strongly impregnated with salt!

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Cattaro, Ragusa, Gravosa, Spalato, Pola, and Trieste were all visited and enjoyed, and we were fêted everywhere. We anchored at Malamocco, and spent a day and part of a night in Venice, an experience I must really leave out of the pattern of this kaleidoscope, contenting myself with mentioning the comfort of the cushions of the gondolas, which I had always thought to be gaily coloured, and was surprised to find so like graceful floating hearses. Perhaps I may also mention the outstanding features of a crowded day, which I hope will not shock lovers of the Queen of the Seas—Venice is no place for tourists. An excellent fried sole for breakfast at Danieli's Hotel; surprise at finding the Bridge of Sighs so much like a photograph; marvel at the skill of our gondolier in avoiding collisions by fractions of an inch in the narrow canals; the Piazza pigeons; and then going from the glare of the sun into the cool, dark interior of St. Mark's; the Doge's Palace, and the prison cell; Salviati's glass factory; an illumination in our honour soon after dark, and procession of lighted boats on the Grand Canal, fireworks, and their reflections in the still water; and then the blue moonlight of a Venice night. During the commission we also saw Naples, Genoa, Barcelona, and many other famous places, spending the winter in Malta, as was the custom in those days.

I have written little about ship incidents for reasons I have given—Marine officers took little or no part in the work of the ship; but perhaps some notes of a looker-on may be interesting.

The Nelson sailing tradition was then dying hard; the various evolutions with masts, yards, and sails led to desperate competitions to beat other ships and make time records, and ten or twelve men were killed by falls from aloft in our ship alone. Then came the Whitehead torpedo, and with it the crinoline of nets spread round battle-ships; we had to extemporise defences, and I shall never forget the maze of ropes and tackles of various sorts on our deck when the nets were out, suspended from immense wooden booms fitted to the ship's side, or the labour and language expended in getting them in and out. There was a wonderful form of protection for the ship against boat attack by night: we surrounded her with guard-boats, well in the line of fire, and then loaded the heavy guns, 10-inch muzzle-loaders, with case-shot to fire at the hostile torpedo-boats! Gunnery still took a second place to sail drill; it did not lend itself in those days to competition. It was all the Gunnery Officer could do to get off the prescribed practices, and no reliable record was kept of the shooting; at least, I think our method can be fairly described as unreliable; a cask with a flag on the top, or some similar object, formed the target; when a round was fired one midshipman took the distance of the target with his sextant, another took the distance of the splash of the shot, and if their results when worked out showed that the round had gone (say) 300 yards over it had to be registered as 300 yards over, even if we had plainly seen it strike the water 200 yards short of the target; no wonder that

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there was not much interest taken in the shooting compared with the sail drill. Ammunition was sometimes thrown overboard if it was not expended within the time grudgingly spared for gun practice from evolutions, paint, and polish.

The last few months were spent in dock in Malta, the crew sleeping in the *Hibernia*, an old wooden hulk, where we could imagine what it was like in the old days in a cabin on the orlop deck; there was more space and more comfort than I had in the *Alexandra*, a large cabin with a big port, instead of a small one with a little scuttle about ten inches across at the end of a four-foot slanting tunnel through the ship's side, and the cog-wheels of a steam steering engine rattling outside the door; in the *Alexandra's* "flats" there was an oily atmosphere, and a temperature somewhere over 90°. But what we gained in accommodation and fresh air we lost in cockroaches, for which the old *Hibernia* was famed; according to tradition they sat up and barked at you, they certainly ate much of one pair of my boots.

While we were hulked in the *Hibernia*, there was the usual international trouble in Crete; the island was under the Turkish flag, though the Turks only held the low country within a few miles of the coast. "Self-determination on the principle of Nationality" had then no force as a working proposition, but the mountaineers saw to it that no Turk who valued his life could venture into their domain. It was thought by the Chancelleries of Europe that the presence of a fleet

on the coast would alleviate matters. The Cretans appreciated the situation, as did the Greek Press; an Athens paper came out with a cartoon showing Cretans standing on mountains and "cocking snooks" at battleships riding at anchor off the coast. The lesson of the limitations of a battleship as a mountain climber seems still to be difficult to learn, even in these days. In 1915 the War Council told our naval forces to get ready to "take," without the help of an army, the extensive Gallipoli peninsula, with its strong garrison of Turkish troops.

The Admiral left Malta and hoisted his flag at Suda Bay, and I was transferred to the *Temeraire* with him. After a few weeks the Duke of Edinburgh arrived in the *Tamar* to take over the command of the Mediterranean Fleet from Lord John Hay, who had been appointed First Sea Lord. Those were the days when most of the Sea Lords came in and out with the Government; I will not venture to pronounce an opinion upon that as a system, the effect on my own career I propose later to describe. We turned over the *Alexandra* to the new commission, and reached Portsmouth in March, 1886, after three years and three months "up the Straits."

Only a few words in conclusion. At the end of the commission I received a certificate in writing from the Captain that I had conducted myself "with sobriety." Every officer serving in the Fleet in those days had to be given this assurance "should he be worthy of it." The origin of this practice is lost in obscurity; unlike the law of



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the land, it threw upon the officer the onus of proof of his innocence of the crime of drunkenness. I should be sorry to call it a Nelson tradition, and prefer to assume that it originated in the period of naval inactivity that followed the peace of 1815. The Captain was good enough to add "and entirely to my satisfaction. . . . Has tact with men." Upon what he based that opinion I do not know, but I can quote as the outstanding "memory" of all of those days "up the Straits in the eighties" the delight in casting aside all books and theories, and the dawn of the idea that living men are more interesting than dead ones. The joy of handling a small command; of learning the lesson that no two men are alike, and to get the best out of them you must treat each differently; the joy of feeling a party of men, in which you know every individual, rise to an appeal for a combined effort; the pleasure of saying "Come on," instead of the more detached and really greater responsibility of the more senior officer who has to say, "Go on"; these are the joys of the subaltern on service, and he had best make the best of them before the Fates exalt him to greater responsibilities with less human interest.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE ADMIRALTY IN THE EIGHTIES

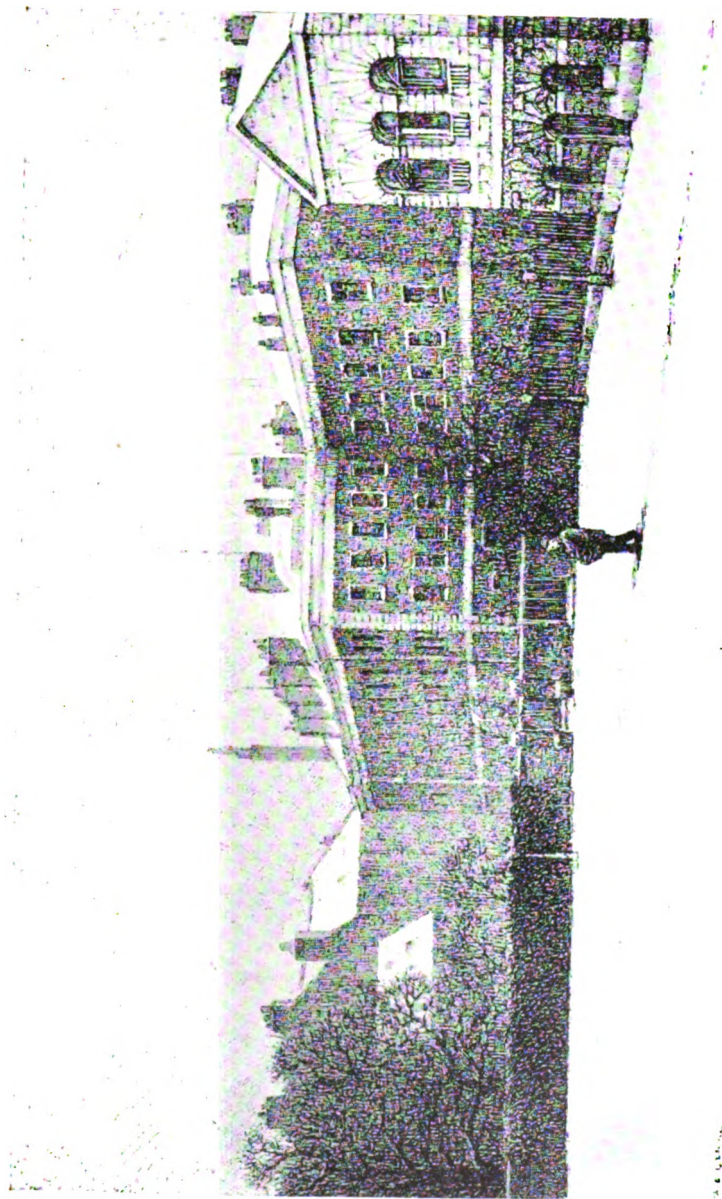
*"He prospers who burns in the morning the letters he wrote overnight"* (Law of the Navy).

AFTER three years "up the Straits," and far away from all such delights, the following is not a bad setting for deep contentment at the age of twenty-four. An orchard, with the last of the daffodils and pheasant-eye narcissus in meadow grass underfoot, and a glorious blue sky, flecked with fleecy clouds, seen through apple-blossom overhead. An after-breakfast pipe, drawing nicely, and the prospect of a day's trout-fishing in a West Country stream, the first day of six weeks' leave to be spent in England in May and June. So far my life as a subaltern of Marine Artillery while serving at sea had lacked one important ingredient—interesting and responsible work. It came suddenly, amongst the surroundings described, in the form of a telegram from the Admiralty, running (I think I can still recall the exact wording), "Report yourself to Captain W. H. Hall for duty at the Admiralty on . . . Appointment follows by post." The appointment arrived the next morning in a big official envelope; I had been selected to serve as a member of the Foreign Intelligence Committee "during

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their Lordship's pleasure, for a period not exceeding two years" and while so serving I should receive my regimental pay (about £120 a year) and an allowance of fifteen shillings a day, a princely income in the eyes of a subaltern of those days.

The appointment was one above all others that I had coveted, because it opened up such an infinite prospect of interesting work, which might fill a whole lifetime, and it certainly fulfilled all expectations. That fishing holiday in the West Country was postponed for thirty-one years. I owed the appointment, as I afterwards discovered, to the custom which then prevailed of changing the Sea Lords of the Admiralty when a Government left office; Lord John Hay, under whose flag I had served in the Mediterranean for the preceding three years, came in as First Sea Lord with the Liberal Government which held office for a few weeks in 1886, and it was he who had selected me. The Admiralty in those times was a very different place from the huge edifice now overlooking the Horse Guards Parade; all that was standing then was the old building facing the courtyard in Whitehall. Most of the present Admiralty was built on the site of the ancient garden, with its high wall hiding it from the old Mall, where the cows used to stand, and glasses of fresh milk and buns were on sale under the shade of the fine old trees which were cut down when the present wide approach to Buckingham Palace was designed. I remember well my first timid entry through the Whitehall courtyard, past the door of what used to be the First Lord's house on the left, and through



**THE OLD ADMIRALTY, 1886.**

View from the Horse Guards Parade, showing wall of the old garden.

*From an etching by M. C. Greene.*



the big portals to the lobby of the dignified Head Messenger for directions about finding Captain W. H. Hall, to whom I had been ordered to report. I remember being very shabbily clad; six years in the Service with nothing but a subaltern's pay had left enough only for essentials, and these, after providing for uniform, flannels for games, and aged clothing for sport, certainly did not include the London turn-out then considered *de rigueur* for all who worked in the dignified surroundings of the great offices of State. But I looked forward to making a better appearance after an interview with a kindly naval agent, to whom I had broken gently the news that I proposed to select him as my banker, beginning my cliency by over-drawing to the extent of £50.

I have thought for many years that a long-felt want would be supplied by anyone, with a real capacity for patient research, who would undertake the compilation of another "Who's Who," to be called "Who Isn't," or by some such title. "*Sic vos non vobis*" would make a good motto for the title page. It would include all the pioneers who leave their bones in the desert after making the road for those who come after them; all those with forward vision whose names have never been heard by the public, but whose devoted work has done more for the nation than has that of any popular hero; those who have worked without reward, and generally without seeing the crowded traffic along the road which they designed and constructed. In such a book you would find the name "HALL, W. H., Captain

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R.N.; born April 25th, 1842. Established the Naval Intelligence Department of the Admiralty, from which sprang the Naval Staff, which did so much to win the Great War. Ruined his health by overwork in the Admiralty in achieving his object, and died on March 10th 1895, leaving a son, who served as Director of Naval Intelligence in the historic years 1916-18." Captain Hall's room was up many storeys and through several narrow passages, near where the Hydrographic Department was housed in the south wing of the old Admiralty building, and there I was conducted to report myself to him. He explained the scope of my work; it appeared that there were serious deficiencies in Their Lordships' information, which might become somewhat pronounced from the point of view of the existence of the British Empire if ever we should find ourselves at war with a naval Power. We had formed no detailed plans for the employment of the Fleet, and we had not the information upon which such plans must be based; it was being collected by a small committee called the Foreign Intelligence Committee, which was working in the Military, Secret, and Political Branch (called for short, M Branch) of the department of the Secretary to the Admiralty.

The Committee had been set up at the instigation of Admiral Sir George Tryon, who had recently been Secretary (he was the last naval officer to hold that post). Besides Captain Hall there were two other officers, and a member of the Secretary's Department, W. Graham Greene;<sup>1</sup> to these I was

<sup>1</sup> Sir Graham Greene, K.C.B., afterwards Secretary to the Admiralty.

introduced in the next room, and allotted a table. Two assistants for clerical work in another room completed the department, and to me was allotted ground which so far was practically unbroken. I was to be responsible for defence policy with the War Office, for detailed knowledge of the defences of all the harbours of the British Empire, and for issue of information on the subject to Their Lordships and to the Fleet; the matter was rather pressing because the naval officers most concerned knew nothing of the defences, and little of the resources, of the bases they might require to use for shelter or replenishment. There was another rather serious gap in their information: they did not know the power of the weapons that an enemy might be expected to use against them in action so "all foreign guns (at sea and in coast defences), and torpedoes, mines, etc., and experiments connected therewith," were added to the subjects upon which I must obtain and supply full information. Electric lights and the armour protection of foreign ships also came into my province. To this wide range of subjects was added subsequently a short but somewhat pregnant heading: "British and Foreign Trade: Defence and Attack." This subject also was confided as an extra to the individual charge of a young subaltern of Marines. The story reads like fiction in these days. Looking back at those times I suppose that British sea power had been unchallenged for so long that everyone had forgotten that it came within the range of possibility for the British Navy to be called upon to fight against any other navy.



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But to get back to personal memories. It was a great experience for a young Marine subaltern. I can see myself now, seated at a table away from the window (the window tables with a good light are the perquisites of the seniors in an office), looking at a blank sheet of paper, dipping a pen in ink, and wondering how to begin. Captain Hall had told me to get out reports about bases for the British Navy for the Admirals on each naval station, and he said, "You had better begin with Hong Kong." Until this day I have never confessed, but I did not know even where Hong Kong was, and the first business was to secure an atlas and find out. I do not want to criticise schoolmasters, as I have never got over my fear of them since school days, when I realised that within their domain they wield autocratic power over their subjects which transcends that held by the ex-Kaiser, or even by President Wilson in war. I simply state the bald fact that neither at a private nor at a public school had I learned a word of geography that remained in my mind. There was one word I remembered from still earlier lessons, the word "jute"; and even now if anyone says "geography" I at once think of "jute." There used to be a book for the young that tried to stimulate interest by describing places somewhat as follows: "Lat. . . . Long. . . . Pop.: 20,000. Trade—Hides and Tallow," and sometimes it ended "and jute." The chief excitement lay in deciding whether to guess "and jute," or to leave it at "hides and tallow" when asked a question. No one could

ever tell me what jute was until I extracted the information thirty years later from an "expert" at an Imperial Conference, but even he was a little hazy about it. Only within the last few days I discovered that nearly all oversea trade of the world depends upon jute, because no other material is strong enough to make bags and bales for merchandise that will stand rough handling. When it was necessary, on account of the blockade, to "control" jute in the Great War, everyone heard of the importance of that commodity on account of its influence upon the industrial prosperity of certain Scottish factories on the East Coast. I only mention these matters to try to depict the starting-point from which my work at the Admiralty in the eighties began.

A Government Office is a machine of great power, and, as with all such machines, you have to overcome the inertia before you can get it to "function." Once started in any direction it gathers momentum, and is difficult either to turn or to stop. You can compare it to a steam-roller of immense weight. If, carried away by youthful zeal and conviction, you think that the great machine ought to move in some direction or disaster will result, you must study its mechanism and you must locate two things, the starting-lever and the brake. In every community of a hundred men you will probably find one or two starting-levers, men of original thought and driving power who try to get things done, twenty or thirty brakesmen who try to stop them, and the remainder who don't know which they are, like the

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“little sillies” amongst the Peter Pan fairy-babies who were in doubt about their sex. The first thing to be done by anyone who aspires to move a Government Department in any big question of policy is to locate the starting-lever man, and inspire him with the soundness of the idea; he is not always easy to locate, but of one thing you may be almost certain, you will not find him in the limelight. Then, if you are very inexperienced, you will think that something will happen; you have forgotten the brakesmen. You must convert them if you can, and this may be a labour of Hercules; they are probably just as patriotic as the starting-lever men, and they do not oppose progress from a desire to be saved trouble, but from genuine conviction that because a policy established by their grandfathers under entirely different conditions was sound, and was carried on by their fathers without disaster, “Why shouldn’t we do the same?”

First, let us look back at the mechanism of the Admiralty in the eighties, and then at the change of policy which Captain Hall did so much to bring about. Apart from “Their Lordships,” who came and went, exercising from time to time an influence which depended upon their personality, and upon whether they stayed in office long enough to make it felt, the greatest power in the Admiralty for good or for evil lay with the inner ring of the civilian staff, the Secretary’s Department, an excellent folk they were, capable, hardworking, and loyal to naval tradition. They wielded great power, by the way they presented

the briefs to their Lordships, by the turn of the phrases in the letters they drafted to the Fleet and to other Government Offices, by the influence they could exert upon the tone of the replies from other Departments, and by personal conversation with their colleagues of the great Civil Service, especially the Treasury, where the ultimate power was located, though there was a story of a First Lord who asked in the Admiralty: "For what expenditure do we require Treasury approval?" "For anything under half-a-crown, sir," was the reply.

Every letter arriving in the Admiralty was taken first to the Secretary's clearing-house. Those of sufficient importance to influence policy were passed at once to the branch of the Secretary's department most directly affected. Each letter was then clothed in a "jacket," a paper cover of foolscap size, with squares on it in which to write the subject, the registry number of the branch, and the list of people to write "minutes," and there was a space in which these minutes were to be written. The Secretary's department decided who should write the minutes, and the highest authority, put last, was expected to give the final decision, which the branch concerned embodied in the reply. The department also looked up former letters bearing on the question, and decided which of these to attach for perusal by the minute-writing authorities, should they be able to spare the time. To illustrate the system: I will quote an actual example with some element of humour in it. When torpedo craft and sub-

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marine mines were first being widely developed as an element in foreign coast protection, I remember conceiving the idea that the Nelson system of keeping close watch in war-time over harbours containing enemy war-vessels would require amendment, because there would be too much risk for the warships employed on the watch; it was long before the days of wireless telegraphy, but homing pigeons had constantly been used with success for carrying messages in land war, and foreign countries were experimenting with them at sea. If a man-of-war watching a foreign harbour obtained important news she would have to leave her post in order to get the information to its destination, so many such vessels must be used to avoid sacrificing the chance of reporting further developments. Obviously, if a few fast yachts or similar craft, each carrying homing pigeons, could do the watching, then men-of-war need not be risked against mines and small coastal torpedo craft, and all watching vessels could send news by pigeon without leaving their posts. The scheme doubtless had its defects, and was capable only of application in certain waters. Knowing that it would be an unpardonable indiscretion for a young Marine to put forward such a far-reaching proposal, I got a friend of the "starting-lever" type in another Government Department to get his office to suggest the idea to Their Lordships, and when the letter arrived I saw it with much joy go successfully through the first of the processes in its Admiralty career. I watched it

gradually rising in its jacket without opposition to the highest authority named thereon, but, alas ! he could not have had time to consider the matter; he wrote: "There would be a fear that these birds might carry misleading intelligence." Pigeons fly very high over the sea; they could not carry misleading intelligence unless an enemy caught them, removed their messages, and substituted others. There was no appeal, my infantile attempt to influence policy was strangled at its birth.

That is only a digression to illustrate the machinery and the process through which a letter passes before action is taken upon it by a great office. In those days from a fortnight to three weeks was the minimum time required in the Admiralty. In the War Office it was longer; there they also used jackets, but they had an additional brake on the machine. Each jacket, after the letter had been inserted, was folded lengthways; a sort of ring of paper was then slipped over it, so as to hold it round the middle like a belt. I do not know the origin of the practice; it worked out somewhat as follows: The official whose opinion was invited first slipped off the paper belt, then straightened out the foolscap sheet so as to be able to read the contents, and sometimes as many as twenty letters in similar jackets and belts were attached for him to read, and he had to repeat the same process for each one to gather its contents. I once calculated that the average official in the War Office in those times must have spent the equivalent of

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three weeks in every year in taking off the belts and straightening out the papers before he could read them. I hope these notes will suffice to convey an idea of the purely mechanical inertia which had to be overcome by anyone conceiving the quixotic idea of bringing about any change in policy.

The policy of the Admiralty in the early eighties was in danger of being dominated by the advocates of passive defence. There passed into my possession a few years ago through a second-hand bookseller one of the last copies of a document which would have been of great value to historians if the policy it advocated had continued to hold its sway over our rulers until 1914; they would have traced in it the germ of the downfall of the British Empire. It bears the date 1860; it is called the "Report of the Commissioners appointed to consider the Defences of the United Kingdom," and here are some samples from its pages:

"During the wars of the early part of this century, when the strength of the Royal Navy had attained an extraordinary development, it was equal to the performance of all the duties imposed upon it; but it appears doubtful to Your (Her Majesty's) Commissioners, having regard to the present state of Continental navies, whether even a fleet of such magnitude as we then possessed would now be able to perform them all efficiently."

Then, after a reference to the certainty with which the movements of an enemy's fleets could be combined by the aid of steam, but without giving any credit to our own Admirals for taking advantage of the same facilities:

“ Even if it were possible that a fleet sufficient to meet the emergency of a sudden naval combination against this country could be kept available and fully manned in time of peace, such an application of the resources of the nation would lead to an outlay of the public revenue far exceeding the expenditure which would suffice for that object under other circumstances. The first cost would be very great, and the necessary expense of maintenance would be continued, involving the employment of a large additional number of trained seamen—a class of men who can with difficulty be obtained, and who are necessarily the most costly of any branch of the military service owing to the various qualifications required of them. A periodical renewal of the entire fleet would, even in ordinary circumstances, be requisite about every thirty years.”—Etc., etc.

Fortifications were recommended as a cheap substitute for the requisite minimum of naval strength to ensure security, and the Commission built the “Hilsea Lines,” still standing on the land side of Portsmouth as a monument to their policy. Two naval officers signed the report. I wonder how many could be found to do so in these days ?

It was not until I had read that report that I traced to this origin the principles against which Captain W. H. Hall fought with all his energies within the walls of the Admiralty. The dawn of reversion to the policy which won us the Great War in the early years of the twentieth century can be traced in the report of Lord Carnarvon's Commission on Commerce and Coaling Stations. In 1886 that report was too recent to have had



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much effect upon policy. It was dated 1882, and four years was then too short a time for a principle, however true, to gain sufficient momentum of opinion and affect the policy of a great department; there was too much inertia to be overcome. The Carnarvon Commissioners realised that they could not measure the standard of local defence in any part of the world until the duties of the Royal Navy had first been determined, and they laid them down in these words, which Captain Hall constantly quoted in his minutes and memoranda:

“The Royal Navy is not maintained for the purpose of affording direct local protection to seaports or harbours, but for the object of blockading the ports of an enemy, of destroying his trade, attacking his possessions, *dealing with his ships at sea*, and, we may add, of preventing an attack in great force against any special place.” [My italics.]

It is very obvious that if hostile ships are dealt with all the other advantages result automatically. It follows that they should be left no rest whether at sea or in harbour (a point missed by the Commissioners), and the soundness of these principles has since been abundantly proved, but early in the eighties they did not carry so much weight. More attention was devoted to what had to be defended than to the forces which alone could cause danger; a building programme was prepared which included chiefly large coast defence vessels with a short coal radius, to be distributed about singly to guard individual mercantile harbours, and the strength of the sea-going fleet was not

based upon the strength of foreign fleets. It was clear that no progress could be made without first ascertaining the strength of possible enemies, and the Foreign Intelligence Committee, largely through the energy and Parliamentary influence of Lord Charles Beresford, was extended and formed on February 1st, 1887, into the Naval Intelligence Department, of which Captain Hall was appointed the first Director. The department did more than its name implied. An Assistant Director, Captain R. N. Custance,<sup>1</sup> was charged with the mobilisation of our own naval forces for war, an operation for which no preparation had hitherto been made. The “ N.I.D.” was at first looked upon with considerable suspicion, and met with opposition at every turn; but the work grew rapidly, and almost overwhelmed the small staff. I was fortunate enough to be a witness of Captain Hall’s family life as well as of his public work, so am able to write with intimate knowledge of his daily routine. He got up at about 4.30, worked at home from 5 to 8 a.m.; arrived at the Admiralty at 10 a.m., and worked until 7 p.m., taking a short hour off for luncheon when he could spare the time; and he worked for 1½ hours after dinner every night; he took no real holiday while at the Admiralty. He gave his life for the Service. He did more than anyone else to bring about the Naval Defence Act of 1889, which established the principles that saved us in the Great War.

Of course we all tried to keep up with him as

<sup>1</sup> Admiral Sir R. N. Custance, G.C.B.

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far as our physical powers extended; there was no hope of another increase of staff after the difficulty experienced with the Treasury in getting the department launched at all. As an example, I may mention the cutting down of the salaries from those originally approved to a level far below the sums paid to army officers similarly employed in the War Office. Then I learned the value of my early Service teaching, that however many my duties might be, I had no rights whatever. I had been told in writing that while employed at the Admiralty I should receive fifteen shillings a day besides my regimental pay. That would have given me, as a Captain, about £520 a year, or more. I was given £400. We were much too wise to complain, but someone got hold of the case and asked questions in the House of Commons, and received an evasive reply which came as near to prevarication as statesmen permit themselves on such occasions—something about our salaries being “based upon” those in the War Office, as far as I can remember. On the demand and supply principle the procedure was justified by results; but it was a sore temptation to needy Marine officers to seek the higher-paid Army appointments, especially if they were married. The tradition for the Navy was that, in order to get the best officers to go to sea, you must make shore service unattractive—“Keep them poor” was the motto.

As an indication of the attitude assumed towards the new department, I can also vouch for the fact that, when the plans for the new

Admiralty building were being studied, only two smallish rooms were allotted for its accommodation, on the plea that the need for intelligence and preparation for war was temporary, and the demand would soon be reduced! I see by the Navy List that in the Great War of 1914-18 the department performing the functions which fell entirely upon the N.I.D. in its early days were performed by 280 officers, ranking from Admiral to Sub-Lieutenant, by 90 ladies of all ranks in society, by 106 civilians, and by I cannot gather how many Admiralty clerks, about 90 are mentioned. Just before writing these notes I received a letter from an old colleague of the original N.I.D.: "I always think of Y—— and M—— and D—— as the small nucleus from which sprang the huge present organisation, in the days when we were young and full of hope and troubles were light." I am sorry he feels like that; my own memory of those times is that troubles were very heavy, hopes very low, and health often bad; the room in which we were crowded was over a dustbin, which did not conduce to youthful energy, and I do not know how we should have kept up our faith in the future if we had not been inspired by the example of such a chief when the outlook seemed hopeless and work thrown away, but the sound principles won in the end, and this makes one full of confidence, even if not young in body any more.

Within two years of the establishment of the Naval Intelligence Department enough information had been collected about foreign fleets and re-

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sources to base our building programme, not upon what the Navy has to protect, but upon the strength at sea of possible enemies. The House of Commons, the public, and, above all, the London Chamber of Commerce got wind of the situation, and the Naval Defence Act was passed in 1889; the principles were then adopted which led to the "Two Power" standard, and afterwards to the "60 per cent. above the next Power" standard. A system was established, and a "War staff" was soon maintained to work it; we were not caught unawares at the outbreak of the Great War, and we made the most effective use of the resources at our disposal. *Finis coronat opus.* I should like to see a statue in the Admiralty courtyard to Captain W. H. Hall.

My gratitude can never be adequately expressed to those great folk who gave me, as a young Marine, a chance of participating in such big events. There is nothing like being told when young the pattern of the great mosaic of which your work forms a tiny piece, it makes the dulllest and most monotonous business more interesting. Looking back at those years it is the work that stands out most clearly, but there were, of course, recreations, and the work itself provided its own amusements at times. Soon after the N.I.D. was launched upon its career we were given the opportunity of purchasing a few foreign books that we thought likely to prove of value to us. It was about the time that the French were experimenting with mélinite, the explosive that was expected to perform the

function attributed to all new inventions, “revolutionise warfare.” I saw the name “Mélinite” in a catalogue of French books, and asked that it might be purchased for me; soon afterwards it arrived, a French novel with a glaring picture of an inadequately clothed lady called “Mélinite” on the cover; we were asked politely whether we found such subjects of special interest in the new department. Then there was another occasion, when Sir Francis de Winton had been appointed to conduct a campaign against a tribe called the Yonnis in West Africa. He was anxious to know to what extent he could rely upon naval resources at Sierra Leone for the use of his troops. His staff officer came to the Admiralty and asked me what naval stores there were on the spot, and in my innocence of official phraseology I wrote to the Naval Store Branch, and asked, “What naval stores are there at Sierra Leone?” They replied, “Only a few hundred tons of patent fuel.” I informed Sir Francis de Winton accordingly, and he at once wrote back to say that he knew that there were lots of boots, helmets, and even hymn-books; so I wrote to the Naval Store Branch again: “With reference to your Minute No. . . . . of . . . . ., are there not also boots, helmets, and hymn-books at Sierra Leone?” The crushing reply came back by return: “Those are victualling stores.”

Then, apart from the Admiralty work, came rather a tragic little incident at a London dinner-party. I was sitting between my host and a lady who, not knowing to what Service I belonged,

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and by way of putting me at my ease, told me that a nephew of hers had just gone into the Marines and "Wasn't it a pity?" Only a severe kick in the ankle from my host stopped my tongue and saved the harmony of the evening.

Official correspondence between the War Office and Admiralty in those times was carried out with great dignity and formality, combined occasionally with a touch of acrimony; it resembled in weightiness of phrase the correspondence between the Chancelleries of the Great Powers. There was one *dossier* which meandered between Whitehall and Pall Mall for about seven years and referred to what was sometimes called the "active" and sometimes the "floating" defence of ports; it struck at the root principle of naval strategy and it was a model of polysyllabic politeness combined with protest. The War Office was responsible for submarine mine defences of harbours, and brought matters to a head by a letter saying that Mr. — (the Secretary of State for War) would no longer accept the responsibility for the mines unless their Lordships would provide war vessels to guard the minefields; the statement was met with the reply that, before their Lordships could go into the matter satisfactorily, they would be glad of an exact definition of the meaning attached by the War Office to the expressions "Active" and "Floating" defence of ports. It seemed that seven years of correspondence, weighing about half a hundredweight, might have been saved; the reply came promptly: "Such vessels of Her Majesty's Navy as may be

told off exclusively for the individual defence of individual ports." The answer was, "No such vessels will be told off," and the correspondence was laid to rest.

There was another incident affecting minefields more directly. When I was told to gather information from the War Office for the Navy about the defences of our harbours, it was clearly necessary to know the plans of the minefields. To get this idea through the official channels would have taken many weeks' correspondence, and a possible definite refusal, so I adopted the more speedy method of walking across the Horse Guard's Parade and bringing the plans back under my arm; they were given to me, by the way, by Captain G. S. Clarke, R.E.,<sup>1</sup> who at once saw the reasonableness of the request. It appeared that the friendly channels left for traffic in and out of our mercantile harbours were rendered dangerous by a particularly sensitive sort of mine, which went off when touched if certain precautions were not taken on shore (by an Army subaltern officer) to keep them harmless. The Admiralty, being responsible above all things for maintaining the security of our sea commerce, protested against these arrangements, and were told in reply that "naval concurrence" had been obtained. It turned out that the official in charge of the local coastguard station had been asked if it would be all right, and he had given his consent without referring to higher authority.

These stories are not repeated with any idea of

<sup>1</sup> Now Lord Sydenham.



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carping criticism, or to pose as what my old shipmates would call a "Jimmy-know-all"; I think they are worth recording as illustrations of the incidents which arose in the old days when Admiralty and War Office did their work in water-tight compartments. All that must, of course, have been changed now by an entente between the Naval Staff and the General Staff at the War Office, but I have no hesitation in saying that in the days of which I write the interests of the country were deliberately subordinated to interdepartmental squabbling. There was no co-ordinating authority except the Cabinet; no record was kept of its proceedings, and on at least one occasion I remember the First Lord and the Secretary of State for War coming away from Downing Street having gathered exactly opposite impressions of a Cabinet decision, which led to years of acrimonious correspondence. It was about Ascension, and the story is too long for inclusion with all its interesting ramifications, some of which are full of humour and include references to turtles, farming, collie dogs, gun-mountings, and white ants.

For recreation during those years there was but little time, the department was too short-handed. During the first few weeks, when Lord John Hay was First Sea Lord, there was sometimes a chance of a game of lawn-tennis in the Old Admiralty garden. I had had the good fortune to attract his attention as a player when serving in the *Alexandra* at Corfu; the Flag-Lieutenant collected me, and I remember arriving

at the gangway in great trepidation for my first trip with a Commander-in-Chief in his barge. Of course, being ignorant of Service etiquette, I stood aside for the Admiral to get in first. Senior officers do not like sitting waiting in rolling boats alongside while their juniors step in, so the routine is for the junior to get in first, and get out last. I hope I may be forgiven this digression, as it may be helpful to others. The game on the flat site of the old Venetian dockyard at Corfu led, three years afterwards, to several pleasant digressions from Admiralty work on summer evenings, before Lord John Hay left and the work increased. In subsequent years, it was sometimes possible when near a breakdown to get off for as much as ten days at a time without the work suffering seriously; but we had no understudies, so there was always the feeling hanging over one of the pile of work accumulating until the day of return. It took about a year to get acclimatised to indoor office work after having led an outdoor life for some years, and I shall never forget the debt of gratitude owed to sympathetic friends who realised how matters stood. There were no half-holidays or week-ends for us in those days; we worked up to 7 p.m. on Saturdays as on other days, and sometimes on Sundays; but some special friends used to lend me a horse to ride in the Park late on summer evenings (that was in the days when men rode in the Row in the evenings in frock coats, tall hats, tight blue overalls, and Wellington boots !); and one summer, when living at Wimbledon, the same friends kept a pony

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specially for me to ride in Richmond Park on the rare days when I could take a half holiday after 5.30 p.m., taking the residue of the work home to be done late. As a candidate for the Staff College anxious to improve in horsemanship, there was also the good luck for me of being allowed to attend riding-school before breakfast with the Household Cavalry recruits in the winter months, a form of exercise strongly to be commended to all engaged upon office work who may have the chance.

Of work not strictly connected with the Admiralty I remember the useful experience of being given charge of an assemblage of about four hundred special constables, of all ages and all walks in life, hastily gathered together one Sunday morning in Wellington Barracks because of a danger of riot. I was told to form them up as a battalion to be marched to Trafalgar Square; the only uniformity about them was that they all had policemen's armlets and truncheons, but no knowledge of any sort of drill. We had them ready somehow in about twenty minutes, got them there safely, and stood for four hours in drizzling rain, feeling very hungry; with the assistance of Household Cavalry the police ultimately averted the danger of serious disturbance. There were some humorous incidents. At Wellington Barracks I went up to an old gentleman who seemed rather bored at being taught to form fours, and said: "You seem to know all about it, would you like to fall out?" He replied: "Yes, I think I should; you see, I'm a retired General."

Then I noted a smart-looking man with a pointed beard whose face I knew; thinking he must be an old shipmate, and anxious not to commit myself further, I went up to him and asked: "How do you like this job? When did we meet last?" He answered: "Did you ever get fitted for a pair of boots at P——'s, sir?" I forget what the difference of opinion had been between the Executive and the People, but one of the popular leaders of those days against the forces of authority afterwards became a Right Honourable and a Cabinet Minister, so I suppose that there must have been something to be said on both sides of the controversy.

Then there was Queen Victoria's golden jubilee in 1887. The weather was glorious, and it was a summer of pageants. The service in the Abbey, the procession up Whitehall led by a row of Princes with the Emperor Frederick, then Crown Prince of Prussia, showing up conspicuously in white uniform and glittering appointments. Mentioning the Crown Prince of Prussia reminds me how friendly we were with Germans in those times; they were ardently supporting proposals for increasing the British Fleet. Speaking from knowledge, I agree with recent writers who aver that Bismarck's policy was opposed to all friction with England. In the pageants were to be seen Lord Wolseley, then a popular idol, and Lord Roberts on his white charger, greeted with ringing cheers as he rode at the head of the detachments of overseas troops. There was an incident in one of the processions that is worth recording as an

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example of the quickness of thought in a London crowd. The Captain in command of the Naval Brigade had brought a young acting sub-lieutenant as his A.D.C., to whom was allotted a charger not steady enough for the occasion. The naval uniform and equipment is singularly ill-adapted for riding, admirable as it may be on its proper element. When the horse ran away the boy sat him well, but by the time he arrived at full gallop in Trafalgar Square from the direction of Pall Mall, his cocked hat, sword, and such-like garniture had been lost overboard. The bystanders emulated John Gilpin's audience in their remarks and advice as he flashed by, but one voice, from a small boy, piped clear above all others; pointing up to the Nelson column, he called out: "Anchor, 'Ardy! Anchor!" There were street decorations and illuminations galore, a naval review at Spithead, and a big march-past of troops at Aldershot. We had no "army" then, as we now understand the word, only a collection of battalions and other units, which were assembled in larger formations whenever occasion demanded, and transport suited to the country was then obtained and allotted to them. No prospect of employing a British army in Europe had dawned on the horizon; the military idea was that it was more likely to be wanted to fight an invading army, as it well might have been if the principles of the Royal Commission of 1860 had prevailed.

Looking back at the years preceding the Naval Defence Act of 1889, it is not easy to diagnose

the influence of the different popular forces which were brought into play to bring about the passing of that Act. There had been war scares in 1878 and 1885, which led to panic legislation and the voting of large sums by Parliament; the chief form of preparation for war used to take the form of a sort of music-hall mobilisation, associated with popular songs of the "jingo" type, Union Jacks, and an extra consumption of whisky. The idea seems to have been that wars could be won by throwing money and defiance at an enemy, and our standard of naval force had sunk to a point of danger which reflected itself in popular panics whenever a storm arose on the European horizon. I think that the chief outside influence employed to bring about the reform was used by the London Chamber of Commerce which, assisted by Lord Charles Beresford, put strong pressure upon the Government of the day. Lord Charles Beresford resigned<sup>1</sup> from the Board of Admiralty and worked hard outside for an increase in the Fleet, and for a regular plan of campaign with a staff to work out the details. I also remember the leading part taken by the *Pall Mall Gazette* in a Press campaign, which was of the utmost value. The work done and reforms introduced in the Admiralty in the eighties of last century established sound principles which enabled succeeding administra-

<sup>1</sup> Soon after joining the Admiralty as Junior Sea Lord, Lord Charles Beresford, with the sanction of the First Lord (Lord George Hamilton) had represented personally to the Prime Minister (Lord Salisbury) the need for a Naval Intelligence Department, which was evolved from the Foreign Intelligence Committee as a result of his representations.

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tions to explain matters to the nation, and to obtain national support for the only policy which can give us security. Naval defence was soon recognised as too vital an interest of the people to be made the subject of party strife; the electorate would not stand it. A few men in public affairs have at times attributed the world competition in armaments to the steps taken by Great Britain in 1889 to ensure security at sea, but it would be more correct to attribute the competition to the writings of Captain Mahan, who published abroad about that period the secrets of sea-power, which were then grasped for the first time by the "Militarist" Powers. Captain Mahan's books were translated into every European language.

## CHAPTER V

### THE STAFF COLLEGE IN THE EARLY NINETIES

*"Take heed what ye say of your rulers, be your words softly  
spoken or plain,*

*Lest a bird of the air tell the matter, and so ye shall hear it again."*

(Law of the Navy.)

WHAT exactly incited me to go up for the Staff College in 1889 I cannot remember. I think it must have been chiefly a desire to "get on," and to get wider experience than was offered by the routine work at one of the Headquarters of the R.M. Forces, or by the idle life that Marine officers were then forced to lead in H.M. ships. This sounds rather priggish, but I think it is not far from the truth, so I will let it stand. There was also the incitement of income. Few Marine officers in those days had anything more than their pay to live upon, and they managed to do so by rigid economy and by relying on the patience of tailors who seldom pressed for payment but fixed their prices accordingly. It was seldom possible to pay ready money for the "richly gold-laced" and embroidered garments and appointments we were obliged by regulation to wear; a suit of mess dress alone cost over 15 per cent. of a year's income of a subaltern, and we had many other costumes, but the tailor was generally



long-suffering and willing to wait. I think that he looked upon the supply of clothes to us as a "legitimate gamble," and I don't think he ever lost his money in the end, but he had to wait a long time for it sometimes. In the Army I should say that practically every officer had an allowance from his parents or from some source or other, but if the allowance was not a large one he could not aspire to the Staff College, where the expenses were higher than in a cheap regiment, though lower than they were in an expensive one. Like a tailor with his bill, I looked upon the Staff College course as a gamble. A small legacy had come to me, and I invested it in an education that would lead to an increase of income if I was given a Staff appointment at the end of the course, and I think many army officers, especially the married ones, had the same incentive.

Two years at the Camberley Staff College is a great education. You probably go there under the impression that you know a good deal about the art of warfare because you have passed a severe competitive examination to get in. You come away convinced that you know nothing; and if you aspire to the responsibility of high command you had better spend the rest of your life in learning. I don't mean only book learning, that side was rather too much accentuated; we had too many examinations, and attached too much importance to them. That was all changed after the South African War.

Joining the Staff College is uncommonly like joining a boys' school for the first time. I don't

think that any of us liked it much for the first few months, we had not sorted out our friendships, and I think we all adopted the same veiled hostility to the Staff that the schoolboy does to the teacher. For some of us there was also a feeling of unreality and waste of effort. In my own case this was rather accentuated; I had been lucky enough during the previous three years to be working at the Admiralty behind the scenes in public affairs, and to have been employed in writing memoranda which might possibly influence the policy of the Government, so it seemed rather futile at first to expend the same effort on papers that would only be examined, marked, and destroyed. Then there was the perpetual doubt about the object for which the Army was maintained. It was a severe shock for any disciple of the Naval School, which taught that only by a Fleet strong enough to prevent invasion could we win a great war, to find that every scheme set at the Staff College assumed the invasion of England by a large Continental army.

Instruction was given chiefly by lectures, which were delivered both in the mornings and in the afternoons. We took copious lecture-notes with a view to the final examination at the end of the two years. We were then examined on all that we had been taught during the whole course, and placed in order according to the marks given to us by outside examiners, who could only judge us on paper, having no knowledge of our personality or qualities more useful to the soldier

than the trick of concealing ignorance in answers to examination questions. Most of the work was done indoors; we had not then learned the system of "Staff Tours," by which Staff work can be taught practically under peace conditions almost as well as by war experience. We did a few tactical days over ground in the immediate neighbourhood that we knew by heart, but war experience was necessarily lacking in the "teachers," and I do not think we got much interest or instruction out of those experiences. On the other hand, we learned much from fellow-students; all branches of the Army were represented, and the Mess contained a kaleidoscopic collection of uniforms which provided an interesting study for a week or so. I have forgotten to mention the branch of instruction on which most time was spent—military surveying. We did most of that in the open air, of course, and we spent an average of two days a week in making large scale plans of selected little bits of country, and many hours indoors in "mucking in," which was the irreverent expression we used for working them up into finished drawings. One of my contemporaries earned great glory by specialising in decorative North Points, on which he must have spent many hours every week. Our productions came back to us with various comments, and we thought that the criticisms of our draughtsmanship were rather overdone. Our greatest expert, a Royal Engineer who had earned great fame by his surveys of large areas on the North-West Frontier of India, had one of his best produc-

tions at the Staff College returned to him with the advice written across it, "You should practise gravel-pits."

I am afraid I am overdoing my own criticisms. Those two years of surveying work certainly gave us a grasp of small areas of ground and a power of drawing plans rapidly and neatly, although our most critical fellow-student said that he only learned one thing in his first year—not to knock over his Indian-ink bottle! The theoretical work gradually worked up to a climax. The papers set required a good memory for facts—where a given corps was on a certain day; what was the maximum depth of a ford which infantry could cross (we had to think first what subject we were being examined in, the estimate in the reconnaissance book differed by a few inches from the estimate in the tactics book!); the exact dimensions in inches of a gabion, a sort of wicker-work cylinder used in forts; and so on. I can only give the actual effect on my own brain of the final cram. Just before the examination I was working late at night in my room, where I kept on the mantelpiece my pipe, tobacco, matches, and watch-key; after finishing work I went up to the mantelpiece, opened my watch, lighted a match, and then pondered where to apply it to the watch. Next morning I carried my sponge and a pair of socks to the bath, threw the socks into the water and kept the sponge in my hand. At breakfast time I opened a letter, threw it into the fire, and kept the envelope in my hand to read. This seems to point to ab-

normal lack of brains, but I think that most of us were in the same state, and, after all, I did not do badly in the examinations.

We really learned a good deal both from each other and from the Staff, and I think we learned most when we were given some research work to do and left to ourselves to do it with the assistance of the excellent Staff College library. During the two years we were given three memoirs to write on different subjects, and compelled, if we wanted to do well, to consult original authorities and form our own conclusions about historical events and the lessons to be learned therefrom. What struck me most was the unreliability of national histories of wars. Facts were distorted in them to suit the national view, and it seemed impossible to find really unbiassed historians. For instance, although seventy-five years had passed since the Waterloo campaign, there did not seem to be any reliable account in English excepting Chesney's Waterloo lectures, quite a small book, not giving much detail but showing original research and fair judgment. We also specialised in the 1866 campaign in Bohemia, and were fairly well supplied with accounts from both sides. For the 1870 war we had not the French official account, which has since thrown so much more light upon that campaign. Reference to 1870 reminds me of our most valuable experience of all, a tour round the battle-fields in the Metz district, Wissemburg, Worth, Spicheren, Mars-la-Tour, and Gravelotte-St. Privat. It was a revelation to find the difference between studying

battles on maps and studying them on the ground over which they were fought. In those days the little crosses in the fields marked the spots where men had fallen and still rested, and this added much to the realism of the study. By approaching the ground from the attacker's side, with a copy in hand of the actual orders issued, we could almost see the battle proceeding and smell the powder smoke.

For the last two days of the tour we put up at hotels in Metz, and on our last night we were invited to dine with the German cavalry regiment in the town. It was an experience which at my present age I should be sorry to repeat. We sat down to dinner at 5.30 p.m. and rose from the table at 11.30—with exceptions. The German officer who had sat on my left was literally under the table. I had read in novels about people going under the table at dinner, but had never seen it happen, and on this occasion I confess that I did not notice his disappearance because I was talking to my other neighbour; when I turned round the convivial one had silently slipped away, and I did not realise where he had gone to for some minutes. It was not considered a regular drinking evening, so we were let off lightly. Only two officers sent round formal messages that they wished to drink with each of us, but I believe that sometimes every officer used to do so, and each toast had to be drunk with no heel-taps; you had to reverse your glass after drinking to show there was no deception. My neighbour on the other side was most in-

teresting, he had ridden in Bredow's charge at Mars-la-Tour, where it is claimed that about 600 cavalry put a whole hostile army corps out of action at a very critical moment. The disappearance of my left-hand neighbour called my attention to my own wine-glasses, of which there were at least six, intended for various liquors; one was full of excellent burgundy, one of sweet champagne, and another of beer! When the party broke up most of them went to a beer hall or café to finish the evening, but some of us succeeded in getting away to bed. These are perhaps digressions from the subject of lessons learned. Next morning I learned one which altered my whole conception of modern war.

We were invited to go over some barracks. After seeing the barrack-rooms, which seemed never to have been ventilated, and smelt horribly, we were shown the Quartermaster's store, and it was there that I learned my lesson. In my own service it would in those days have taken a very long time to serve out a complete new set of clothing to reservists and others on mobilisation (we had no Marine reservists, by the way; that was before the days of the Royal Fleet Reserve). When a man drew his kit he had to enclose it in his arms as best he could, and it was odds in favour of his dropping a boot or something and having to stoop to pick it up. The German store contained pigeonholes holding a complete new kit for every man, and on the top of each kit was a blanket. On mobilisation the men

were marched through the store, each man pulled his blanket off, shovelled everything into it, and moved on at once without dropping anything. Many minutes were thus saved, and the cumulative effect of working out all such details was calculated to ensure that the German army would strike first before any neighbouring army could possibly be ready. The German theory was that, by adopting such methods, the issue of a war could be determined by careful preparation in time of peace. It has since transpired that—in 1870—they were right; the French had allowed for slower mobilisation, and had not worked out details with the same meticulous care. For instance, an immense number of waggons required on mobilisation were stored at Chalons in an enclosure with high strong walls and only one gate; it took several days to get them out one by one by normal methods. On their system of instant readiness to strike, an unscrupulous clique in the German General Staff imposed their theory of “preventive war,” which means attacking a neighbour first on the assumption that if you do not knock him out he may attack you. They tried to attack France in 1875-6, putting forward this plea, but were curbed by Bismarck, who paid some attention to what he called the “imponderables,” the moral forces in the world, which he thought he could not mould to his purpose. I think it was the realisation of the instant readiness for war of the German armies, combined with study of the effect of such readiness in the issue of a campaign, that was the most



valuable of all the lessons we learned at the Staff College in the early nineties.

On the way back from Metz some of us visited the field of Waterloo, which seemed almost ludicrously small in comparison with the battlefields of 1870.

During the second year of the course came one of those incidents that change the whole course of one's life, though their importance may not be recognised at the time. Captain Maurice Bourke, who was Gunnery Lieutenant of the *Alexandra* when I joined her in the Mediterranean in 1883, came down to Camberley to stay with a friend in the Coldstream Guards, and I was asked to dinner to meet him. He told me after dinner that he was going out to the Mediterranean Flagship again as Flag-Captain to Sir George Tryon in the *Victoria*. To Admiral Tryon's initiative had been due the establishment of the Foreign Intelligence Committee at the Admiralty which developed into the small Naval Intelligence Department, the germ of the present Naval Staff. The Admiral seemed inclined to take up the further question of Intelligence and Staff work in the Fleet, and Captain Bourke was extremely keen on the subject. He realised that it would be necessary to begin on a very small scale. You can do almost anything in the Service if you don't ask for money; and the idea occurred to him that Marine officers, who had little to do at sea, might help a good deal at the start. He explained that, besides the money difficulty, there was the difficulty of cabin accommodation. He

said he realised that I was now a Captain, but would I come out to the *Victoria* and do a subaltern's work again, with the prospect of becoming the first Intelligence officer of the Mediterranean Fleet, and do all the staff work sorely needed to prepare for war. He added that, in his opinion, we were so unready for want of such preparation, and so absorbed in peace routine, that disaster might result unless the work was soon undertaken. Other nations had learned from the Germans in 1870 the lesson of readiness for war, and they were applying to their fleets the lessons they had learned about armies. Plans must be drawn up in time of peace; every detail must be worked out with meticulous care, and actually tested, if the best results were to be obtained from the resources available. Then he added, "Will you take it on?"

I hesitated. I was obliged to think of my pocket. It meant abandoning the gamble I had gone in for, sacrificing the legacy I had invested in a Staff College education, and giving up all prospect of recouping myself from the extra pay I hoped to draw from Army staff appointments, of which I was told I had a good prospect. Then I thought of the lessons learned at the Staff College about the effect of preparation for war as practised in Germany. He said: "Think it over; there's no hurry; of course you must finish the course first, and get your *p.s.c.* There will not be much chance of getting things started during the first few months of the commission. We shall have to shake down first." I thought it

over in the night, and next morning agreed, but with some hesitation. I knew that the Mediterranean Flagship was expensive to live in. A Marine officer had not to put his hand in his pocket and buy paint for his ship, as a Commander had to in those days if he wanted promotion.

“Dost think that thy ship needeth gilding,  
And the Dockyard forbear to supply?  
Place thy hand in thy pocket and gild her,  
There be those who have risen thereby.”

(Law of the Navy.)

But every officer in the wardroom had to bear the expense of entertaining foreign officers, who constantly come on board, and of other forms of entertainment expected of the Flagship of the show squadron of the world. No help was given out of public funds in those days for such entertaining. Then, again, I knew that to start an Intelligence Department would cost money; it would mean taking meals on shore, entertaining Consuls, Vice-consuls, and others on board, and so on, not to mention travelling myself occasionally on unofficial missions for which I could not claim expenses. There were still a few pounds of the legacy left, and I then had a Captain's pay of about £220 a year, which was much more than I had had as a subaltern in a former flagship on the same station, so I decided to chance it. The Metz experience had taught me that it would be work worth doing if only I could make a success of it, and going back to the work of a subaltern in order to obtain a cabin did not seem

in proportion to figure very largely in the picture. The idea of going to the Mediterranean again with such big work to initiate, with the prospect of the best companionship in the world for a bachelor, in the wardroom mess of one of the best ships in the Service, was altogether too tempting. Next morning I promised to accept if the proposal materialised.

From that time onwards the Staff College work became desperately interesting. There was always something to be learned about preparations for war on land, drawing up plans, working out details of stores and equipment required, the sort of information wanted, and so on, and it was easy to draw the parallel in sea war. We had no army in those days, by which I mean no organised army as understood on the Continent. We had no brigades, divisions, and higher formations always working under the same commanders and staff to be sent on service in the same organisations in which they were trained, and we had no complete mobilisation equipment of land transport for European war. All our recent wars had been in parts of the world where such transport would be unsuitable. When an army was required, small units (regiments of cavalry, mounted infantry companies, batteries, battalions of infantry, or whatever might be wanted) were hastily grouped together under new commanders and staff, and formed into brigades or larger units according to requirements. Transport adapted to the particular country was obtained, stores were purchased from contractors, and reserves of

ammunition collected as fast as possible. We did not base our reserves of anything on anticipated war requirements. Still there was much to learn at Camberley about such matters, and also at Aldershot, both during the Staff College course and afterwards, when we were attached to different branches of the Service for four months to widen the experience gathered in our own respective Services. In those days soldiering was not taken quite so seriously as it was after the South African War. There was an unwritten rule that all field days at Aldershot should end before the sacred dinner-hour, and I have seen an attack pushed at a rate which verged on absurdity when there was a doubt whether the battle would be over in time for a certain train to London.

So far I have referred chiefly to the work, but there was plenty of play. In the winter there were the drag-hounds to follow, the best riding-school I know. If you aspired to a Staff appointment in the field you had little chance of getting one—I think rightly—unless you went well with the Drag. It was a fine test of nerve and horsemanship, and as the meets were always in the afternoons they did not interfere much with the studies. We always had two lines, with plenty of jumping, and a check between them. It was positively dangerous to ride with the whole mob of anything from eighty downwards who converged on the gaps behind the leaders. It was a regular steeplechase, and the safest course was to get away with a lead if possible and pick your

own line, not selecting the smallest places, where you would probably be jumped on if you came down. As a Marine with empty pockets I was naturally not much of a horseman, but managed to acquire for £30 a big thoroughbred screw, dicky in the fore-legs, and a roarer; I shall never forget his long sweeping strides, cantering while the rest of the field were galloping, or the gallant way he faced and sailed over any jump that I had the pluck to put his head at. He might have won the Point-to-Point—a great glory for a Marine—if it had not been for me. Being weak in front, jumping on to hard roads was not his strong point, and there was a road three fences from the finish. There were two places to cross—one, a little jump in and a huge bank and hedge out, the other, a big jump in and an easy one out. I chose the easy way on to the road, and so lost the race. George Younghusband<sup>1</sup> rode him in the Aldershot Point-to-Point while I was abroad at Metz, and described his experience in his *Reminiscences*. He was a grand horse. By the way, those *Reminiscences* remind me that I am called “Salt-horse Jack” in Younghusband’s book; this is a mistake, I was generally called “Mariner,” and the name still crops up in talk with contemporaries of “our batch.” We thought no end of ourselves, and far superior to all other batches above or below us, as all batches worth their salt do. In the batch above us (there are always two at the College) the man who is now best known to the public was Charles

<sup>1</sup> Major-General Sir George Younghusband, K.C.B.

Monro.<sup>1</sup> In our own batch we had Bruce Hamilton,<sup>2</sup> Spencer Ewart,<sup>3</sup> " Jack " Cowans,<sup>4</sup> " Joey " Davies,<sup>5</sup> Count Gleichen,<sup>6</sup> George Younghusband, and several others who rose to high Army posts. I will not tell any stories about them in case I meet them, as I sometimes do. " Johnny " Hardinge,<sup>7</sup> of the Scots Fusiliers, was a conspicuous figure with the Drag, the boldest rider with the loosest seat I have ever seen. He always rode with a slack rein, and was splendidly mounted on fast and clever horses. He fell off five times in the Point-to-Point, caught up, and came past me full speed when I had my little contretemps in the last road. He would ride at anything. The story is told of him that when he was afterwards Brigade-Major at Shorncliffe he rode to a garden-party, and a girl there said to him: " Is that your celebrated mare the ' Little 'un ' ? They say she can jump anything. Can she jump that ?"—pointing to an iron railing enclosing an asphalt tennis-court. " Yes, of course," he answered, and put his mare over it. He was afterwards killed riding in the Row at a footpace; his horse crossed its legs and came down suddenly.

<sup>1</sup> General Sir Charles Monro, K.C.B., Commander-in-Chief in India.

<sup>2</sup> General Sir Bruce Hamilton, K.C.B.

<sup>3</sup> General Sir J. S. Ewart, K.C.B. (late Adjutant-General of the Army).

<sup>4</sup> General Sir J. S. Cowans, K.C.B. (late Quartermaster-General of the Army).

<sup>5</sup> Lieut-General Sir F. J. Davies, K.C.B. (late Military Secretary).

<sup>6</sup> Major-General Lord Edward Gleichen, K.C.V.O., C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O.

<sup>7</sup> Captain the Hon. A. S. Hardinge, Royal Scots Fusiliers.

There was another man of a very different type; he was a head and shoulders above the rest, and an inspiration to everyone. He was the embodiment of the Army tradition in those days—to do everything well, and to lie low about your attainments. He passed in easily first of the batch, about a thousand marks or more ahead of us all. He played racquets in the R.A. v. R.E. matches, so his form at that game was above the average. He was an excellent captain of the Cricket XI., and a fine bat. He was one of the whips of the drag-hounds, and he won the Point-to-Point. In brains and in sound judgment he was in a class by himself, far ahead of everyone, and he was the most quiet and unassuming of all, with the most influence, a not uncommon attribute of quiet men; we all bowed to his judgment, and were ready to follow him like sheep. He retired as a Colonel before the Great War, to do work with Lord Roberts that he thought of greater national importance than any he could do in the Service. He had no personal ambition, and even if I gave his name it would probably convey no idea to the public. Men of lasting influence do not seem to be heard of often. If he reads this description of himself I shall get into trouble, but I hope it will not strain a valued friendship !

The Drag and an occasional Saturday with the Garth Hunt were our chief winter amusements. We once played football, Those who wore night-shirts (I wonder how many men still do that) v. Those who wore pyjamas. As our average age



must have been far on the wrong side of thirty, it is unnecessary to add that we did not take the game very seriously; we played about ten minutes each way, with about twenty minutes interval! In the summer we had plenty of cricket, and ran two teams, one for serious cricket, and the other for village-green games and "coffee-housing." I was in the first team for a time, but was cast out for swiping across at good length balls on my leg stump, a failing from which I have never recovered. My only exploit worthy of serious cricket was to catch E. M. Hadow out behind the rope-stays of the bowling screen; our umpire gave him out, and he retired under protest. If the ball had gone under the rope-stay it would have been dead, as that was a boundary; the question was whether it was dead if it passed over the stay. I don't know now whether he ought to have been given out, but I still feel the after-glow of pride at holding the catch; the ball was skied, and seemed never to be coming down again. Playing for the second team, the "Owls," was a great recreation. We had a four-in-hand coach to drive about the country, and one of the eleven was always selected for his alleged experience in driving a team. The wheelers were hired, the leaders borrowed from amongst the students' drag-horses, not well-accustomed to harness. There was an awkward turn, with a bank by the side of the road, on the way to the gate, and there the coach was turned over on its side at least once during that summer. The eleven occupied all the top seats, so the grooms



THE STAFF COLLEGE "OWLS," 1891: AN ELECTION PLACARD FOR  
CAPTAIN OF THE CRICKET TEAM.

Designed by Lieut. O'Leary Shaw, Indian Army.



had to get inside; they generally kept the doors ajar, ready to jump out in case of emergency, and they always ran alongside until we were clear of the entrance-gate. Our chief humorist used to call them the “ pall-bearers.” (I really must here interpose a story of Colonel J. F. Maurice,<sup>1</sup> the able historian and lecturer in military history in our time. He was not a great linguist, and when taking a party in a brake round the battle-field of Mars-la-Tour he wanted the driver to turn the brake round in a narrow road. He got off, and called out, “ Bouleversez le voiture ! ” The class also got off the brake, hastily !)

Village cricket with the Owls was most entertaining. I think it was in 1891 that the rule for declaring an innings at an end was introduced. We were playing at Yateley, and had decided to draw stumps taking the time by the church clock, which we could all see. The Yateley umpire was the parish clerk, and in charge of the clock. The new rule had not penetrated into country villages, and when we “ declared ” in the second innings there was a storm of indignation and protest; but we managed, after much persuasion to get the other team to bat. There was only one wicket to fall at ten minutes to time, and we thought we had a certainty, when the church clock suddenly jumped on five minutes. I forget whether we got the last man out, I think we did; but I remember that the situation had to

<sup>1</sup> The late General Sir J. F. Maurice, K.C.B., historian of the South African War, and well-known writer.

be relieved by our standing beer all round at the local inn. The drives home on the coach on summer evenings through the woods, and the smell of the pines and bog myrtle were very pleasant. So were the drives to Ascot in race-week. We had a tent for luncheon and tea there, and did things in great style, regardless of the strain on our pockets; but those were extras, and not compulsory charges. The cult of the horse and attendance at races were very prevalent in the Army in those days, and it was difficult to resist the temptation of Ascot when practically everyone went. We did not work in Ascot week.

Riding in the sandy tracks through the pines before breakfast was another pleasant experience. I will not try to emulate Charles Kingsley, whose "Winter-garden" is the most inspiring bit of prose poetry about those woods. We often worked out Eversley way with the drag, and thought of him and his fame. We heard that he had been fond of dining at the Staff College and meeting soldiers, and stories about that are told in his *Life*. I must confess, though, that in the winter time especially we sometimes became heartily sick of the gloom and monotony of pine-woods. I remember one Sunday after luncheon going for a walk with a fellow-student, and getting desperate at the sight of perpetual Scotch firs. Although in Sunday attire and unsuitable boots we decided to walk on until we saw an oak-tree. This we did not find until we got to Swinley Woods, and as we were then as near

Windsor as we were to Camberley, we walked on there and came back by train.

Besides being a devotee of the racehorse, nearly every Army officer used to pose as a judge of good liquor. We had a wine-caterer with a sense of humour who was determined to score off the members of the Mess who complained about the quality of the drinks provided. One man aspired to have a delicate palate for different vintages of champagne. One guest-night his glass was filled alternately with two entirely different brands, of which even the colour differed as well as the quality. He did not notice any difference, and never dared to complain again. On St. Andrew's night, when we had a haggis, a piper from Aldershot, and all the usual formalities, the same wine-caterer sent round Irish whisky instead of Scotch in the quaighs (I wonder whether that is spelt right? Readers who are not Scotsmen will perhaps forgive my adding the explanation that I mean the little silver cups with two handles and a rounded base, containing neat whisky, sent round with the haggis and again at the end of dinner). I don't want to accentuate the drink question; I suppose the Army, like the civil population, used to drink more wine in those days than they do now, and in some regiments there was senseless extravagance. In a battalion I was attached to at Aldershot for a time champagne was handed round every day at luncheon as a matter of course. There was a great change after the South African War. When I was at the Staff College again as a "teacher" we went

away for a Staff Tour, and I had to settle the hotel bill. There was a very high charge for the use of a sitting-room for conferences—I think it was about £4 a day. I asked why, and the answer was, that as all the officers drank nothing but water now the profits on liquor expected when the contract was made were not forthcoming, and a loss had to be avoided somehow!

After two years at the Staff College the last few weeks are a very sad time, like the last few weeks at school, in a wardroom mess of a happy ship, or in any other community of boys or men who have worked together and got to know each other's failings and idiosyncracies and good points. It is a great place for making lasting friendships. Most of "our batch" have soared high above me in Service rank and responsibility, but the friendships remain. They have had opportunities which do not fall to the lot of a Marine, who does not get the same chances of success (or failure!) but lots of interest in life as a looker-on at the struggle. I hope I have not been unduly critical about the Camberley course of instruction in the early nineties. The few names I have mentioned are a sufficient guarantee of the value of the course, but somehow there was undoubtedly a feeling in the Army that the tests should be more practical. It was assumed of Army officers in general that they were good practical men; but a p.s.c. officer was assumed not to be so, unless he proved it. The same might, I think, have been said of the "three-one" man in the Navy of that period.

## CHAPTER VI

### UP THE STRAITS IN THE NINETIES

*"It is well—that the gun may be humbled, the compressor must check the recoil"* (Law of the Navy).

BETWEEN the years 1886 and 1892 a vast change came over the appearance of the Mediterranean Fleet. Masts and yards disappeared from ships of the line. The seamen of the upper yards and tops, the links between the days of steam and the days of sails with their Nelson tradition, were still in the Service, but the vocation of the old type "sailor" had definitely passed away. Tradition dies hard in the Navy. A ship's quarter-bill was still made out on the old lines, and included even "royal-yardmen," but the royal yards on which they displayed their nerve and agility no longer existed. There was no longer the desperate competition against time between mast and mast in the same ship, or between the different ships of a squadron. The old heavy masts with all their top-hamper had gone, and the bewildering masses of halyards, lifts, braces, sheets, topping-lifts, and all the rest of them, no longer mystified the uninitiated or hampered the deck space. Pole-masts there were, sarcastically referred to as soldiers' masts, with fighting-tops, the light yards fixed in place and intended only for



display of signal bunting, of steaming cones, of revolution number-flags, and of helm signals. Instead of seeing little besides masts, ropes, and rigging from the conning tower, its occupants had nearly an all-round view of the horizon, and a fair chance of seeing something of the enemy.

Gunnery was slowly making progress and coming into its own, and attention was being paid to battle training. Fleet manœuvres were devoted to that object, and Sir George Tryon, the Commander-in-Chief, was looked upon by the Service, and by the world in general, as a leader amongst the Admirals of his time in originality of thought and skill in handling a fleet so as to gain by manœuvre an advantage in gun-power over an enemy in action. One of the points he constantly made was that decentralisation was essential in a fleet. An Admiral must make his general plans clear to all his Captains, and must trust chiefly to their loyalty and initiative in carrying out those plans during the course of an action. His view was that, in a battle, the Admiral would soon be unable to give orders to his fleet by the only methods, flag signals, then available for his use. The signal books were huge volumes containing voluminous instructions for every conceivable description of formation and manœuvre, most of which required long hoists of many coloured flags, and very few were adapted to battle. The agility and lightning movements of the old royal-yardmen were emulated by the signalmen on the Admiral's bridge in order to bend the flags in the right order on to the halyards with the utmost

speed when the Flag-Lieutenant gave the word. These masses of men could not have survived for many minutes in a close action, and there was no space to accommodate them all under the armour protection with their bulky equipment of bunting and halyards. Admiral Tryon's whole attention was devoted to simplifying these arrangements for fleet control, and the simplest of all was his "T.A." system, which meant that the Captains of ships in his fleet must manœuvre without signals and divine the Admiral's instructions by watching his movements. In order to obtain an advantage over a hostile fleet it was generally recognised that if the fleets were formed in "line ahead" (ships one behind the other on the same course), a great advantage would be obtained by "crossing the T," because the fleet representing the top of the T would be able to concentrate the fire of many guns against a few guns of the fleet represented by the upright stroke of the T. Then, again, the distribution of the guns in each individual ship would have a great influence upon the tactics and manœuvres that would be most effective. Most foreign ships of that time could develop a far heavier gun-fire ahead than they could astern, and one of Admiral Tyron's ambitions was, if possible, to cross the T astern of a hostile fleet rather than ahead. (That was in the days before the perfecting of the torpedo and the mine made this such a dangerous proceeding.) This he once explained to me in confidence, drawing diagrams on his blotting-paper, when I got to know him better, and had got

over a certain fear of his dominating personality, which was shared, by the way, by far more important folk than myself! I think that he realised the importance of the personality of a Commander in high command, and perhaps posed a little, not by any means from smallness of motive, but for the good of the Service, and he would not have objected to the "Tryon T" inspiring in his Captains the same confidence that the "Nelson Touch" did in those of old days.

Arriving at Malta in March, 1892, I found the harbour full of ships of queer design and outline, of samples, we could almost say, no more than two of each class, such as the *Victoria* and *Sans Pareil*, *Nile* and *Trafalgar*, or *Edinburgh* and *Colossus*; the classes bore little resemblance to each other, and the strangest sample of all was represented by the *Polyphemus*, in which the torpedo took the place of the gun as a main armament. She sought protection from the enemy's fire by submerging nearly all her hull by taking sea-water into special compartments. Her speed was against her. Accommodation was most uncomfortable, especially at sea, and she found her use when a highly-placed official pressed inconveniently for a man-of-war to take him about. The chief feature of all the battleship designs was very low freeboard, raising doubts in the mind whether the guns could be fought at all in a sea-way. I think that the "defence" policy of the Government, which prevailed far into the eighties of last century, and devoted more attention to what had to be protected than to the

hostile forces which were the source of danger, had reflected itself in our ship designs. We did not think then that the best form of protection was to knock out an enemy by being before him with rapid and accurate fire, by hitting first, and going on hitting. Another feature was that most ships had very little auxiliary armament, only big guns and a few small short-range 6-pounders, which were thought sufficient to beat off the attacks of the torpedo craft of those days. The *Victoria*, the Flagship I had been ordered to join, had two 100-ton guns firing from a turret ahead, and one ten-inch gun firing astern. Her outline was ugly, her general shape resembling the form of a boot. She had three little masts forward, arranged in a triangle, so that the other ships of the Fleet could use them to give them a line for keeping station on in "quarter-line," and one pole-mast aft with an armoured top and a couple of square yards for signal halyards. She was in dry dock when I joined and reported myself to the Flag-Captain, Maurice Bourke.

Marine officers going to sea for the second time are put to a severe test, which must be faced and gone through satisfactorily, or their whole lives will be embittered. They find that most of their former chums and contemporaries in the Navy have passed over their heads in the Service. Those who were lieutenants may be still in the wardroom, probably as Commanders, but some will have left the wardroom and become Captains of their own ships. The midshipmen and naval cadets will be lieutenants or perhaps Commanders.

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All will be doing wider and more responsible work than when the original friendships were formed; the Marine officer will still be doing the same or very similar work. In the nineties the fact had not been realised that the main excuse for leaving the Marine officer without employment at sea had disappeared with the masts and sails. He still, excepting at General Quarters, was left in idleness in the wardroom, while all his men were usefully employed in various evolutions. In my own case this drawback was perhaps rather accentuated; seven years before I had had the complete charge of a large flagship's detachment of Marines because my Majors were changed several times, and two of them, being unable to stand the climate, had spent much time in hospital or on the sick-list. The *Victoria's* detachment was smaller, and in charge of a healthy Major; accommodation was very short, and in order to provide me with a cabin while I was trying to establish the first Intelligence Department in the Fleet, the arrangement had been made that the subaltern of Marines should be withdrawn temporarily from the ship's complement and that I should take his cabin and do his work. That consisted chiefly of turning out with the guard and presenting arms to senior officers passing or visiting the ship. When in Malta the Marines of the Fleet were landed weekly for drill on the naval recreation ground at Corradino, and I did the duties of Adjutant to the Fleet battalion. It was all what an old chum called "good discipline of character" after spending two years at

the Staff College, where men are handled—on paper—by the hundred thousand.

It was on the Corradino cricket ground that I first met Admiral Tryon. The wardroom of the *Victoria* was noted for containing many good cricketers, and we had many matches on that ground. The wicket was on asphalt, covered with cocoanut-matting, the fielding was on limestone, with plenty of nubbly bits which take the skin off the back of the fingers of a fieldsman used to grass until he finds out that the rough surface makes the ball jump, so that it is seldom touching the surface of the ground, and the best thing to do is to dispose one's hands accordingly. Cricket balls on such ground have to be dyed red all through, or they soon become the same colour as the ground. The Admiral used to come up in the evenings to watch cricket after his day's work in the office in Strada Mezzodi, on the other side of the Grand Harbour. Captain Bourke introduced me to him one evening, and I must confess that I felt extremely timid. He was a very big man, with a dominating personality, and he had a way which has been described as making his two eyes look like one, which seemed to bore through you. After a little talk about the cricket he told me his ideas of the lines on which he wanted me to work, and gave me the run of his office at Admiralty House, where a room was prepared for my use. I was to see any papers I wanted to, secret or otherwise, and could get to work as soon as I liked. As a result of the establishment of the Naval Intelligence Department in the Admiralty five years before, much

printed information had arrived which all wanted arranging for reference, and there were big gaps in the information applying to the Mediterranean which must be filled up. Another point was that information constantly came through to supplement the printed reports, which must therefore be kept up to date if they were to be of any practical use. I suppose that even now it is too soon to write fully about Naval Intelligence work in the Mediterranean in the nineties, but a few tales can be told without danger of indiscretion.

Take, for instance, the defence of the Grand Harbour of Malta, which has been completely altered by changes in policy and the construction of a breakwater. In those days there were many authorities concerned in making the harbour easy of access for our own ships and difficult of approach by hostile vessels. There was a fair-way buoy of pole shape to indicate the channel. On the same side of the harbour was a torpedo of a type controlled from the shore; it was made to sally forth and chase any enemy ship which it was intended to destroy. There were observation mines, close under the fire of the guns, to obstruct the channel. There was also a boom, to be stretched across the entrance of the harbour to keep out hostile torpedo craft. All were under different authorities, and it had been nobody's business to co-ordinate their efforts. That sort of work fell upon the new Intelligence Department, and it then appeared that the torpedo could not be run out unless the fair-way buoy, required by friendly ships for safe navigation, was first hauled out of the way; and if the

observation mines went off they would blow up the moorings of the boom !

As affecting readiness for war, much information was available in the form of dull-looking returns, which no one had time to read and to check thoroughly. Some very interesting points soon cropped up. There was a shortage of about 65 per cent. in the reserve of gunpowder (we used powder for the heaviest guns in those times) kept at Malta for the Fleet, because of insufficient naval magazine accommodation. It appeared on enquiry that large magazines in Army charge were filled with ammunition for a siege train, and apparently had been since the Crimean War. There seemed to be some want of a sense of proportion, or a co-ordinating authority with common sense. Then, more serious, was the question of the supply of coal available from local privately-owned stores. The official returns showed that in case of emergency somewhere about 80,000 tons would be obtainable for the Fleet by purchase in Malta. It seemed a good idea to check this figure, so one day I rode round the various stores and looked in. There was scarcely any coal to be seen. The next step was to visit each merchant and ask him whether he could supply within twenty-four hours the amount which he had given as his average stock. Seeing a chance of doing business, A. said: "I not got it, signor, but I get it from B. by to-morrow." Visits to B., C., D., and E., produced similar answers, each would get the coal from the other, and I doubt whether there was an appreciable amount of coal in the whole



of their stores at that time. Reliance on such statistics might have held up the whole strategical plans for several days, and days mean much in naval strategy.

Another rather interesting example of the uselessness of returns, unless it is somebody's business to read and verify them. In the Grand Harbour of Valetta there were always numbers of small sailing-vessels, of queer rigs and piratical appearance, loading or discharging cargoes. If they shipped any arms or explosives a return had to be rendered showing the amounts embarked. These returns were dull-looking documents, full of dates, queer names, and figures, and no one read them; but an examination repaid the labour when it was found that one vessel cleared twice in ten days for "Cyprus"! Investigation showed that she was engaged in trade in arms and munitions between Malta and the African coast in Tripoli, and this had been going on under the noses of the authorities for an indefinite period. Powder was packed in pickle-jars.

It is not possible to give details of other things—knowing the movements of foreign transports, cable-ships, and war vessels (the most important of all subjects, of course), coast protection, and such like matters; but telegraph cables can be referred to without indiscretion. There were several hundred cable landing places, many important cables, and very little known about them by the Navy. Obtaining and classifying the information involved a good deal of hard work. Then, again, the business of the Navy being to

protect trade, it was obviously important to find out about British commerce in the Mediterranean, the carrying trade in British merchant ships coming up the Straits, and the mercantile traffic through the Suez Canal. All that opened up a wide field for investigation; so did defence questions in Egypt, from the naval aspect. I think I have given enough detail to show the interest in the work, and I expect that the Naval Staff of the present day will wonder how things could have remained so at such a recent date, but I think that the explanation is that the British command of the sea had for many years been unchallenged. Individual ships were worked up to concert pitch of cleanliness and smartness, and the Fleet manœuvres prescribed in the signal-books were constantly practised. The German Army system of instant readiness for war, of meticulous preparation to strike quickly in various hypothetical cases, and of carefully-worked-out plans of campaign, had not at that time been applied to our sea forces. Much was done in this direction by Sir George Tryon, Sir Michael Culme-Seymour, and other Admirals who succeeded them in the Mediterranean Command, including Sir John Fisher. Instead of one junior Marine officer being attached to the Secretary's office for a part of his time, Admirals are now provided with a Chief of Staff and a large following, but now that it has all been started and is in working order I don't think that anyone can have the same interesting work that there was when all the ground had to be broken afresh by one

man, and the seeds of the present system were sown.

All this reads rather pedantically I am afraid. The office work involved took about eight hours a day or so, and when we went to sea there was a good chance of getting on with it, as there were no demands for ceremonial guard-work at any odd hour. The great point was that when the paper work, statistics, returns, organisations, and so on, tended to get monotonous, one had only to think of the issues involved if ever war should come, and it was an advantage to have served beforehand in the Admiralty for a few years, and to have some knowledge of the big pattern of which the work filled a considerable part.

During the summers of 1892-95 we had delightful cruises, and visited many familiar spots. When I was first up the Straits in the eighties we were constantly drawn to the eastward by the political situation, but this time we were more free, and saw something of the whole coast of the Mediterranean from Gibraltar, along the shores of Spain, Italy, Austria-Hungary, Greece, and Turkey, to Alexandria, and I also spent a shooting holiday in Tunis and Algeria, which completed the circuit, missing out the French Riviera and the coasts of Benghazi and Tripoli. We also visited most of the islands, the Balearic Isles, Corsica, Sardinia, Sicily, and the islands in the Adriatic and Ægean. Of the places visited while Sir George Tryon was in command, the Dardanelles and Bosphorus stand out most clearly. We were anchored at Vourlah Bay in the Gulf of

Smyrna when the invitation came for the Admiral to visit the Sultan (Abdul Hamid) at Constantinople, and I was one of the fortunate ones selected to go on the staff. Just before we left Vourlah in the *Surprise* a serious accident occurred at General Quarters to the Lieutenant (The Hon. F. C. Addington) in charge of the *Victoria's* 10-inch gun. He was a man of very stout build. In getting on to the sighting-platform as the gun was being trained round, he was jammed between the loading screen and the gun-shield, and squeezed by the hydraulic pressure into a space which, measured across his body, could not have been more than three or four inches. I had charge of the nearest 6-pounder guns, and got to him just as the pressure had been taken off and he had fallen back on to the platform. We moved him carefully to his cabin, but never expected to see him alive on our return from the trip. I may as well add that when we did come back, a week or so afterwards, we found him sitting up in bed, and were allowed to see him only on the understanding that we must not make him laugh too much (he was a very cheery soul) or his broken ribs might stick through his heart.

Every moment of the trip to Constantinople in the *Surprise*, the Admiral's yacht, was enjoyed, and there was something of interest to look at the whole way. Tenedos, with Besika Bay opposite, and the plains of Troy; then the entrance to narrower waters between Sedd-ul-Bahr and Koum Kaleh forts; then the broad channel gradually narrowing to form the celebrated Dar-

danelles Narrows opposite to Chanak. There were large parties at work on the forts, and thereby hangs a tale. The Admiral sent for me, and said, "Did you notice anything about those working-parties we saw?" I said I supposed it was a display for our benefit. He said, "You should have noticed that the spades of those above Chanak, where the Turkish Pasha met us, were bright, the ones below that were all dull, and the working-parties had obviously been doing no digging." With the Pasha sent by the Sultan to receive us came several diplomats from the Embassy, in spotless attire, wearing well-brushed silk hats, and after the usual formalities we proceeded on our way against the strong current that increases so much the effectiveness of the defences against war vessels trying to force the passage. To the best of my knowledge there were no efficient minefields in the channel in those days, but the forts held a formidable armament of heavy Krupp guns, of which the number was being increased, and the defences on the hills behind against attack from the land side were obviously being greatly strengthened. We passed on through the Sea of Marmora, after looking at the Bulair Lines on our left and the Nagara forts on our right, and were lucky in arriving off the Golden Horn at sunrise with the minarets all glowing in the early sunlight, and a slight mist hanging low over Constantinople and the shores of the Bosphorus.

From the moment we landed we were fêted in various ways and taken to different places of

interest. We saw the ceremony of the Selamlık in great comfort, were presented to the Sultan after his attendance in the Mosque, and then we were regaled with fruit served on golden plates, and Turkish coffee in wonderful little cups. We dined on one evening at the Palace. The Sultan was present, but he did not eat with us as unbelievers, and the various Turkish Ministers of State drank only water with the meal, and seemed disinclined to open their mouths in the Presence. Some of the attendants who waited at table wore the same class order of the Medjidieh as some of the senior naval officer guests. On another, less formal, evening, when we dined with the Grand Vizier, champagne flowed freely, and there was a babel of talk, chiefly in French. We lunched at the Ministry of Marine, and I think that all Turkish officialdom present were dismayed when the Admiral, who had been invited by the Sultan to inspect the dockyard, would not sit for several hours at the luncheon-table, or follow the very limited inspection programme suggested by the Minister of Marine, but walked round (it was a grilling afternoon in June) at a pace at which those used to luxurious living found it difficult to follow. There was not much to be seen excepting unreadiness and deterioration of what had been good material. We also dined at the British Embassy, where I saw for the first time a King's Messenger wearing his official badge of a silver greyhound. He happened to be an old friend of Admiralty days in London.

We were struck, as I suppose most people are,

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with the constant contrast of magnificence and squalor. We saw St. Sophia, and we were taken to the Treasury. The jewels (?) reminded one of Sinbad the Sailor and the precious stones as big as pigeons' eggs he used to collect. The marble sarcophagus was a revelation in the art of a sculptor who could work the surface of marble so that you seem to see the skin of well-groomed horses and the play of the muscles under the skin. We also had an interesting trip up the Bosphorus, which looked like a magnified River Dart, with trees growing down to the edge of the water on both sides. We landed above Therapia, where the Diplomatic Corps spend the summer, and went for a lovely walk along the European side. The butterflies were a great attraction, as some of us were collectors. At one point we suddenly emerged just above the foundations of a new fort being made at Rumeli Kavak, and, happening to have a small camera in my pocket to take reminiscences of the trip, I could not resist the temptation of a snapshot, for which indiscretion I suppose I laid myself open to something unpleasant, "with boiling oil in it." To my dismay, I then saw a Turkish soldier by the working-party waving his arm in my direction. I put the camera in my pocket, and beguiled a shipmate into sitting on the spot to look after an overcoat which I left with him while I went off to meet Captains Wilson<sup>1</sup> and Noel,<sup>2</sup> who were approaching in the distance. When we got back we found

<sup>1</sup> Admiral of the Fleet Sir A. K. Wilson, V.C., G.C.B.

<sup>2</sup> The late Admiral of the Fleet Sir Gerard Noel, G.C.B.

my friend surrounded by Turkish soldiers, one of whom explained to us the enormity he had committed. We looked very serious, and suggested that he should be searched, in case any mistake had been made. This was done, with the expected result, as the offending camera was bulging in my own pocket, and he was released. It seemed that the indiscretion was not very serious after all, as the Sultan invited the Admiral to inspect any Bosphorus fort he cared to see. He chose the biggest one on the Asiatic side (Anatoli Kavak), and took me with him. The guns were of very old type, but in good order. For some reason not disclosed all the most modern guns were being mounted in the Dardanelles before any were sent to the Bosphorus defences; perhaps International financiers could have provided a clue to the mystery.

I think that I have mentioned most of the interesting points about that very enjoyable visit to Constantinople. There was a rather tragic occurrence just as the *Surprise* was leaving. The Sultan had sent off gifts to the officers and crew, and amongst the latter's share were fresh vegetables, chiefly crown artichokes. I do not know whether any of the seamen tried to eat the wrong end of them, or what happened exactly, but the whole lot were soon to be seen floating on the waters of the Bosphorus astern of us. At the last moment the Sultan's white steam-barge put off from the shore containing an official bringing a final farewell, and the boat ploughed her way through a fleet of crown artichokes. It was rather unfor-



tunate, and rumour says that next time the *Surprise* went to Constantinople she had even her hencoops and larder empty in expectation of the usual gifts—which did not arrive !

Sir George Tryon was a very good all-round sportsman, and a very good shot. We anchored at many places where there was shooting, especially red-legged partridges, and we learned a good deal about their ways and whereabouts at different times of the day. Everyone keen on shooting who has been up the Straits for several years knows of a few special spots which, if he is wise, he keeps carefully to himself. My own best find was a place on the Turkish mainland, not far from the Island of Thaso. You had to land through the surf on an open beach, and probably had to wade ashore, keeping your gun and cartridges as dry as you could, and then walk about six miles straight inland over a sandy desert till you came to cultivated land, which swarmed with Russian partridges—there were no red-legs in that part. The Commander of the *Surprise* discovered that the partridges near Moudros, in Lemnos Island, sheltered from the sun in the caves by the sea during the heat of the day; he used to take a camp-stool to the beach, and had much sport there. It was as well to keep such spots secret because of the number of guns in the Fleet. I remember at Tenedos, where I suppose that the total number of partridges in the island at that time amounted to about five brace, counting fifty-two guns landing on one afternoon. We had good sport from Salonika, leaving by the

early train for Karasouli, Ghevgeli, and other stations well known in the Great War, returning late the same night. There were snipe and duck to be shot in the marsh to the westward of the harbour. The initiated soon discovered that most of the snipe were to be found in spots trodden by cattle. It was a good place to study bird life. I remember noticing that when a hawk passed over the marsh every snipe got on the wing. On another day I saw an eagle swoop and strike, for the first time. The quarry was a teal. When at Corfu, we sometimes went across to Albania for shooting picnics. At one of them I remember the difficulty of hitting blue rock pigeons from a rolling boat. We had about ten guns ranged along a steam-pinnace outside a cave; a round was fired to bring the birds out, and a cloud of pigeons came out like streaks of blue lightning. Twenty rounds were fired and one bird fell, the rest were untouched, and I think that the one secured probably had the bad luck to fly into shot intended for another.

We spent the autumn and winter of 1892-3 at Malta as usual. I forget the exact date, but some time during the *Victoria's* first commission we went to Catania while there was a big eruption of Mount Etna. We drove part of the way, and then rode up as far as we could on mules, seeing the eruption by night. The burning lava was a wonderful sight, but a sad one for owners of the land. The hot stream set fire to chestnut-trees and swallowed up vineyards as it went. We were at the extreme end of the stream, where it

was apparently quite solid, but creeping slowly by inches over the land. It was a huge mass of lava several feet high. We were bidden to stand on it, and, not knowing how thick the solid crust was, the experience was not exactly pleasant. We soon had to jump off, as the surface was too hot for comfortable walking.

By the time we reached Malta to settle down for the winter the Intelligence and Staff work had grown a good deal, and it was decided that I must give nearly my whole time to it, only going off to the ship when wanted for special duty, and acting sometimes as Adjutant of the Marines of the Fleet when they were landed for drill. I managed to hire a room in Strada Mezzodi, not far from Admiralty House, and lived on shore for the remainder of the time unless the Admiral went to sea, when I went with him. It was then that I got to know him better, and to realise that his dominating Service manner disguised extreme kindness of heart. I remember one morning especially. A young midshipman had set the weekly signal exercise to the Fleet the night before, and had selected a newspaper extract on the morality of dancing, to be flashed in Morse alphabet by one ship and taken in by all others. For this frivolity he was sent for to see the Admiral. I was present when the Flag-Lieutenant announced his arrival. "Am I looking cross enough?" said the Admiral. The Flag-Lieutenant answered "Yes, sir," with a note of conviction. "Then show him in!" Rumour has it that when the Flag-Lieutenant went in again he

found a weeping boy being consoled with his head on the Admiral's shoulder; but this story came to me at second hand, so I cannot vouch for its accuracy.

Polo on the Marsa was a great amusement after office hours in the winter season, and in those days not expensive. You could get a very good pony for £15, and "Black Saliba," a Maltese well known by the Navy, kept our ponies at his stables for fifty shillings a month, all found, including saddles and polo bits. The Navy team was a strong one that year. Digby,<sup>1</sup> Mark Kerr,<sup>2</sup> "Kit" Cradock,<sup>3</sup> and Lord Gillford, the Admiral's Flag-Lieutenant. They reached the final stage in the regimental tournament but did not succeed in pulling it off. Evan-Thomas,<sup>4</sup> serving in the Flagship, was also a fine player, but he was not very fit at the time, and his polo had been stopped by the doctor. Then there were race meetings, at which I was occasionally given a mount, as I could get down to 9 st. 6 lb. with training; and many Gymkhana meetings, which gave much amusement. A good many people used to come out from England for the winter, and what with the opera, a standing institution, at which the Flagship generally had a certain number of regular seats, and dances at the club and elsewhere, there was plenty going on. Baden-Powell<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Captain the Hon. G. Digby.

<sup>2</sup> Rear-Admiral (Major-General) Mark Kerr (Royal Air Force).

<sup>3</sup> Rear-Admiral Sir Christopher Cradock, K.C.B., who was lost in the Coronel battle.

<sup>4</sup> Vice-Admiral Sir Hugh Evan-Thomas, K.C.B.

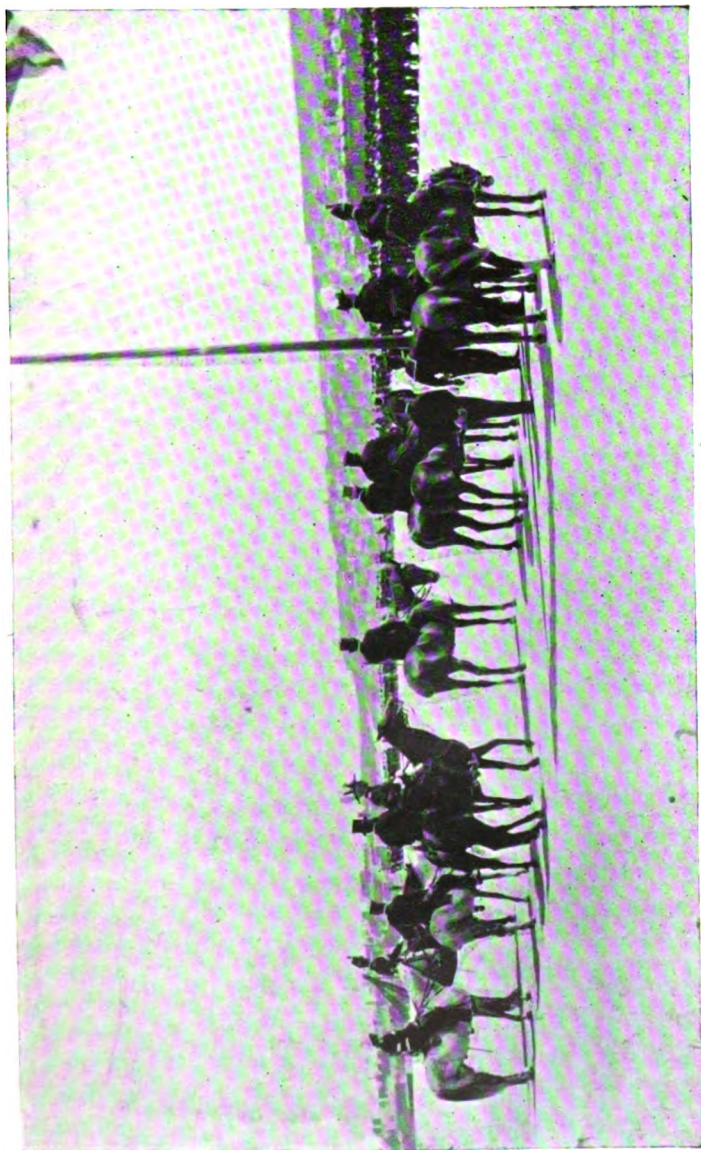
<sup>5</sup> General Sir Robert Baden-Powell, K.C.B.

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was Military Secretary to the Governor, and always ready to take a hand in entertainments.

One way and another, people in Malta who liked each other had such constant opportunities of meeting, that acquaintanceships had a chance of ripening into lifelong friendships, and I think that most men of the Navy and Marines who were up the Straits in those days have a lasting affection for the place because of those friendships. The Army did not like it so much, but they were there all the year round, whereas we went there after long cruises in the summer to baked-up spots, mostly in the Levant, with only our own companionship, which must mean a certain monotony after a time. I have already referred to the cricket on the naval Corradino ground. We also played on the Marsa, where there were no boundaries, and it was possible to hit an eight over the smooth hard polo ground if you were young and agile enough to run it out. There was one corner of the Corradino ground that was not a boundary, it led to a road which soon dipped sharply down-hill. I saw an eight run out there too. If only one played forward with a straight bat it was easy to stay at the wicket. Even I once managed to make 174 not out, and at least two of the Flagship's team had averages of over eighty. Seldom more than one or two wickets fell before we declared, so it was dull work for the batting tail of the team, as fielding on a sort of hard gravelly and rocky surface is not very pleasant.

The last part of this account reads as if it was all play and no work, but it was really more the



↑ Earl Spencer,  
 First Lord  
 ↑ Vice-Admiral  
 Sir George Tryon

# THE NAVAL PARADE GROUND, CORRADINO, MALTA.

Facing page 140.



other way round. By April, 1893, a good deal of progress had been made with the Intelligence work, which promised before long to be in running order. The *Victoria* was recommissioned in April, on the 13th day of the month, on Good Friday, and thirteen wardroom officers turned over to the new commission. Sailors are proverbially superstitious, so no attention was drawn to this coincidence at the time. Admiral Jellicoe, then a Commander, was second in command, and Captain Maurice Bourke remained as Flag-Captain. Soon after we recommissioned the time came when almost the most valuable part of my Staff College course was due; all the members of my batch had been to Aldershot to complete their practical training with troops during the previous summer, and I was offered the opportunity of doing the same with the next batch of officers, who had been with us at Camberley during the 1891 session. It seemed a pity to give up this chance, and the Admiral allowed me to go, on the understanding that it must be for two months, and not for the whole course of about four. He also asked Captain Durnford,<sup>1</sup> of the *Hecla*, to give me a passage to England, which was a great boon, as I had to be considered to be on leave and pay all my own expenses.

After a month with an infantry brigade, of which F. S. Robb<sup>2</sup> was the Brigade-Major, I was attached to a fine battery of R.F.A. under Major Wilfred Lloyd. Then came the news of the loss

<sup>1</sup> The late Admiral Sir John Durnford, K.C.B.

<sup>2</sup> Major-General Sir F. S. Robb, K.C.B.



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of the *Victoria* by collision on a beautiful calm afternoon in June off the Syrian coast, Admiral Tryon having gone down with the ship, with over half the ship's company. During the past five years we have had to face the news of heavy loss so often that it is difficult to remember what such loss means in times of peace. The news cast a gloom over the whole Empire, and messages of sympathy poured in from other parts of the world. The controversy that subsequently arose over the causes of the disaster has long been laid to rest, and I do not propose to revive it. My friends amongst the survivors wrote me many letters, chiefly about the heroism of the Royal Marines, who, after doing their work, stood rigidly in line on the Quarter-deck without a movement until the slope of the deck made standing impossible, and they were told to save themselves. They were a splendid detachment; some, who had been in the old commission, I knew very intimately; I had been long enough with the whole to know them well. Rudyard Kipling has written the epitaph of those and others who "stood and were still to the Birkenhead drill":

"Whether it's widow or whether it's ship, Victorier's work  
is to do,

They done it, the Jollies—'er Majesty's Jollies—soldier  
an' sailor too."

and that other verse about them:

"Their work was done when it 'adn't begun; they was younger  
nor me an' you;

Their choice it was plain between drownin' in 'eaps an'  
bein' mopped up by the screw,

So they stood and was still to the Birken'ead drill, soldier  
an' sailor too!"

Let us leave them with those words. Very few could swim, and two-thirds lost their lives.

I was thankful to receive a telegram ordering me from Aldershot to the Admiralty to help in checking the lists of survivors, and in general work connected with the varied correspondence between the Admiralty and the Commander-in-Chief, all of modern date having been lost with the ship. The First Sea Lord (Sir Frederick Richards) sent for me. His nickname in the Admiralty was "King Dick"; he was the strongest and finest administrator who has held that office in modern times, and not a man to show emotion, but there were tears in his eyes when he spoke of the loss of Admiral Tryon. I also saw the First Lord (Lord Spencer), who told me that the new Commander-in-chief, Sir Michael Culme-Seymour, was going out at once to conduct the court-martial on the survivors, and that he had sanctioned my being sent out to do the same work as before, pick up the threads that had been broken, and replace the papers and records that represented the past year's work, but first I was to stay at the Admiralty until I had visited all branches and obtained a general grasp of the Admiralty side of all the lost correspondence. After about a fortnight of that work I was given an official passage in a P. and O. to Malta, where I arrived laden with confidential books and documents. A gloom had settled over the whole place and over the squadron. The court-martial had just finished its work, and I saw Captain Bourke for a few minutes before he left for

England, much broken in health. His explanatory address to the court is a classic, which shows the spirit of the man and the spirit of the Naval Service. I quote from it the following extract:

“There was absolutely no panic, no shouting, no rushing aimlessly about.

“Officers went quietly to their stations, and everything was prepared, and the men were all in their positions for hoisting out boats or performing any duty that they may have been ordered to carry out. The men on the forecastle worked with a will until the water was up to their waists, and it was only when they were ordered aft that they left their work to fall in on the upper deck with the remainder of the ship's company.

“In the case of the men working below, I was a witness to their coolness. When the order was passed down for everyone to go on deck, there was no haste or hurry to desert the flat. I can further testify to the men below in the engine-room. In the starboard one all were in their stations; the engineer-officer was there, the artificer, and the stokers. I am sure that those in the port engine-room and the boiler-rooms were equally true to themselves, to the country they were serving, and to the trust that was reposed in them.

“In all the details of this terrible accident one spot especially stands out, and that is the heroic conduct of those who, to the end, remained below stolidly, yet boldly, at their place of duty. All honour to them especially!

“The men fallen in on the upper deck also showed the same spirit. I would recall to you what I described in my evidence. When the men were turned about to face the ship's side, it must have passed through the minds of many that to ‘look out for oneself’ would be the best thing

to do. The men must have seen the others coming from forward wet, which in itself might have increased their apprehensions. This order to turn about was given apparently about a minute before the end, and I can hear of not one single instance of any man rushing to the side. It only wanted two or three to start a panic, but I think it should be on record that not one was found who had not that control over himself which characterises true discipline and order. It has been shown in evidence that no one jumped from the ship until just as she gave the lurch which ended in her capsizing.

"I imagine there is not a single survivor who can give any clearer reason for his being saved than that he was more fortunate than his neighbours.

"There is one deeply sad circumstance connected with the accident, and that is the very large proportion of midshipmen who lost their lives. These young officers at the commencement of their career were thus cut off; but it will be to their undying honour that, young as they were, they also showed that spirit of trust and bravery, and one and all remained at their posts on deck to the end.

"There is no doubt that among those lost many individual acts of heroism and disregard of self must have been displayed, but I regret I am only in a position to state one. This is the case of the Reverend Samuel Morris, Chaplain of H.M. ship *Victoria*, than whom no one in the ship was more beloved or respected. It is his words—'Steady, men! Steady!'—when the end came, which bring before one the appreciation of his coolness and valour.

"Even at the moment of the ship capsizing we only hear of him, careless of his own safety, exhorting the men to be cool and calm.

“In his daily life on board he mixed with the men, knew all their thoughts, and advised them in their troubles. A noble character like this inculcates by his example the discipline and obedience which was shown on board the *Victoria*.”

The discipline and heroism of our Naval and Marine “ranks and ratings” under war conditions has since become a commonplace of experience. In order to grasp the full meaning of the lesson of the *Victoria*, it is necessary to consider not war conditions, but perfect peace, and to visualise the surroundings of a fleet cruising in perfect June weather in calm Mediterranean waters. Seamen are not very articulate when it comes to sentiment, but Captain Hopwood’s comparison of a ship’s company to a cable, of which the strength depends upon every single link, does, I think, strike very deep into the creed of the Naval and Marine Service. The old *Victoria*’s, officers and men, had so lived that they bore the sudden and unexpected strain, and their example has not been forgotten either by the Navy or by the nation.

## CHAPTER VII

### UP THE STRAITS IN THE NINETIES (*Continued*)

*"Take thy fate as it comes with a smile"* (Law of the Navy).

MALTA seemed a different place for a time after the loss of the *Victoria*. We all went about our work as usual, and half-heartedly about our play, but it took time to get over the blank feeling and face life again under new conditions. In the Dockyard were lying a few articles which had floated to the surface when the ship went down. Amongst them were some rough boards with angles, courses, and ranges plotted on them for use at gun-practice on a system devised by Captain Bourke before the days of delicate and costly instruments. Then I found a clothes-bag, which had been left inside one of the drawers in my cabin. There was also a Prayer-Book, which had floated up open at the Prayer for those at Sea, and the custodian of the relics gave me some pieces of the Admiral's blue barge, which I had made into a small box for his son.<sup>1</sup> The heavy despatch-box, which floated because the air in it could not escape, was sent to Lady Tryon.

I had lost practically all my own possessions. Having been on leave in England, I had left everything in the *Victoria*, excepting a portman-teau full of necessities. The Admiralty paid

<sup>1</sup> Major G. C. Tryon, M.P., late Grenadier Guards.

compensation covering about a third of the value of what had been lost; the rule was that official cognisance could only be taken of the bare necessities of uniform and underclothing. Later on I recovered a few more pounds towards losses in plain clothes, and even compensation for saddlery, though this seemed rather a startling claim to send in from a ship (as Adjutant of the battalion of Marines in the Fleet I drew an allowance to hire a charger every day that they were landed for drill). That concession was communicated to me, about nine months later, on the day before the Lords of the Admiralty attended a review on the Corradino parade ground; I had hoped to ride past them, in full dress, on a barebacked pony with a rope bridle, but they might have thought the humour rather misplaced, and I should probably not have dared to carry out the plan at the last moment.

It was a great blessing to have plenty to do. The results of about a year's labour in establishing an Intelligence Department for the Fleet had been lost in the Flagship, the threads had to be picked up, and everything started afresh. The usefulness of the work was being recognised at the Admiralty; there was some talk of putting it on a permanent footing by appointing an officer specially to do it, and granting him an allowance to cover his expenses. After some weeks in Malta, with all its associations, it was good to get to sea with the squadron under Sir Michael Culme-Seymour, who soon had things going again. One of the keenest all-round sportsmen in the

Service, very young for his years, and universally looked up to as a sound tactician, he devoted his time at first to putting the Fleet through every conceivable manœuvre in case the nerves of any of the Captains or other officers should have suffered after the *Victoria* disaster; he was a man of iron nerve himself, better described as not knowing what nerves were. He kept himself fit by landing constantly for long walks, with or without a gun or fishing-rod, according to season and opportunity. I remember that, when we were anchored at Cattaro, he walked up the mountains to Cetinje (about thirty miles), while we drove all the way, and he then played lawn-tennis with the Crown Prince of Montenegro, who played in the national dress, with long, tight, high-heeled boots. Afterwards the Admiral attended an official dinner and reception at the "Palace," and seemed as fresh as when he had started; British prestige stood high in Montenegro after that exploit. When at Malta he used to walk and ride hard, and he sometimes even ran; he won the Veterans' race at the Naval Sports. He played racquets for the Navy with Jellicoe, then a Commander, as his partner, drove a tandem, played golf, and once rode in a race round the racecourse ( $1\frac{3}{4}$  miles); that was in a match, *Ramillies* and *Skipjack* against a battalion (the 2nd I think) of the 60th Rifles, on any four-legged animals owned by either side, catch weights, number of entries unlimited. About sixty started, and the Riflemen won the cup, which no doubt still adorns their mess.

I once had the good luck to go on a fishing trip



with the same party as the Admiral to Moustar in Herzegovina; we went as far as we could up the Narenta River in his barge, and then on by train. He was wearing a tweed suit and knickerbockers, ready to fish directly he arrived, and to our dismay we saw all the civil functionaries in their best clothes assembled on the platform to give him an official reception; I think there was even a formal address to be read. A cavalry officer, in a very smart uniform, including boots and spurs, was deputed as orderly officer, with instructions to follow "His Excellency" everywhere. (He gave it up as a bad job when the Admiral walked across the river in the course of his trout-fishing!) There was also much state at the hotel, and an armed sentry always outside the door of the Admiral's bedroom.

Three of us went to a station further up the Serajevo line to fish another river, and were most hospitably received there by an Austrian station-master and his wife, who turned out of their own bedroom on our behalf. The trout-fishing was good, of the West Country type (wet fly as the stream was very rapid). Most of the population of the neighbourhood assembled at the station in the evenings to do us honour or to inspect us, as Englishmen were rare in those parts. I think they must have consumed about a barrel of beer in one evening; we thought it was at our expense, but when we left, the hospitable folk refused to take any payment either for the beer or for our board and lodging. There was some difficulty about getting back to Moustar in time to catch the

Admiral's train, but that was soon met; the station-master sent for a small trolley, driven by handles worked by two big men wearing high red tabooshes with large gilt coats-of-arms. This humble conveyance was in charge of an official in uniform frock coat and sword, and there was much formality. It was all we could do to retain befitting dignity when our shipmates witnessed our arrival at Moustar, and the officer of the trolley jumped out first, clicked his heels, and saluted formally as we climbed on to the high platform on our hands and knees.

But to get back to the Fleet. For several months there was a gloom over us all, though of course it found no expression. We got the men out of the ship for picnics when we could, especially for bathing from the shore, and for swimming classes. When at sea we nearly always stopped engines in the evenings to give everyone a chance of a swim. There is no finer bathing; a few lifebuoys are thrown into the water, a cutter is manned to look after the swimmers, the gangways are lowered, and most folk not on duty have a splendid time in the deep blue water.

I had an interesting and unusual bit of fly-fishing after one of those bathing evenings; a midshipman's cap blew off after the gangway had been hoisted and the "retire" bugle had sounded, so no one could go overboard after it; the signal had been made to get under way, and we were expecting the screws to turn every minute. I dashed down to my cabin, fetched and put up a salmon-rod, tied on a big "Jock Scott," and cast

for the cap. I managed to reach it three times, but failed to hook when I struck. It seemed as if the fourth cast would be the last one, as we were slowly gathering way and I could not get out any more line. There was great excitement when the last cast passed just over the cap, and, when I struck, the hook held. Landing that cap up the ship's side was a tremendous business, and it nearly broke my rod; the wet cap seemed to weigh much more than the four pounds, which I am told is the greatest strain you can put on a line with an average salmon-rod.

Now and then some ship used to signal that a shark had been seen, and bathers were then called out of the water by bugle, or a sail was lowered to make a safe swimming-bath, but I have never heard of a shark touching a man in the Mediterranean. Once we caught one about six feet long when we were dragging a seine-net at Port Said, and thought that it had probably come in from the Red Sea through the Suez Canal. Those seining parties up the Straits are great fun, though not productive of many fish; wise Commanders encourage them, as they are a good palliative for the monotony of ship life in out of the way spots.

You land in the afternoon, a mob of "ranks and ratings" in every sort of piratical kit, take the materials for a big supper, light a fire, draw the net occasionally, and end up with a concert; any song will pass muster as long as it has a good chorus. A banjo and some mandolines always appear on the scene, and sometimes bagpipes; the ship's funny man and "sky-acting party"

are in their element. You sail or pull back to the ship some time before midnight, and it is an understood thing that the party must hoist their boat to the davits, so that the duty men shall not be turned out for their benefit.

One way and another we gradually got back to normal conditions under the Admiral's guidance, and the feeling of depression left the Fleet. The habit of ship-visiting after dinner crept in again—visits by wardroom officers to friends in other ships, using the wardroom skiff, the dinghy, or any means of conveyance that could be obtained; the bigger boats were generally hoisted at sunset, so not available. Then, I think it was at Corfu, one ship ventured to give an entertainment to which all the officers of the Fleet were invited. These gatherings were splendid at providing variety and new topics of interest to vary the routine work, especially in places where there were few attractions on shore. (Their value was thoroughly realised in the Grand Fleet in the Great War, when a properly equipped theatre ship was provided for the use of entertainment parties.) That concert at Corfu marked the final stage of return to normal conditions.

The Admiral remained in the *Sans Pareil* during the autumn of 1893; Captain A. K. Wilson was the Flag-Captain, and Paul Bush<sup>1</sup> the Commander. We spent the winter season at Malta as usual, and the *Ramillies* then came out as the new Flagship. I think she held the record that com-

<sup>1</sup> Vice-Admiral Sir Paul Bush, K.C.B., late Commander-in-Chief Cape Station.

mission for harbouring embryo Admirals, and it is such a record that I will give a list of them, with notes of their employment in the Great War and the years immediately preceding it: Admiral Sir Francis Bridgman (then Captain Bridgman-Simpson), who was afterwards First Sea Lord of the Admiralty; Admiral of the Fleet Sir W. H. May (a Commander-in-Chief, and Controller at the Admiralty) succeeded him as Flag-Captain; Viscount Jellicoe (Commander-in-Chief of the Grand Fleet and First Sea Lord) was our Commander; Sir H. L. Heath was Torpedo-Lieutenant (commanded a Battle Squadron, and Second Sea Lord); Sir A. C. Leveson was Gunnery-Lieutenant (Director of Operations, and commanded a Cruiser Squadron and a Battle Squadron); Sir Hugh Evan-Thomas, who was Flag-Lieutenant (commanded Fifth Battle Squadron, heavily engaged at Jutland); Sir Lionel Halsey (commanded a Cruiser Squadron, and Third Sea Lord); Sir Edwyn Alexander-Sinclair (commanded a Light Cruiser Squadron in the North Sea throughout the war, fought in many actions, the first to sight the enemy in the Jutland battle); Rear-Admiral D. R. L. Nicholson (Rear-Admiral in the Grand Fleet); and Sir Godfrey Paine (Inspector-General Royal Air Force); the last four were watch-keepers in *Ramillies*. The First Lieutenant was E. F. Inglefield, now an Admiral on the retired list, who was Secretary to Lloyds in the war. Not a bad record for the out-put of one commission. We had other distinguished folk up the Straits at that time; Sir

David Beatty was a watch-keeping Lieutenant in the *Camperdown*, Sir Stanley Colville Commander in the Second Flagship (Admiral Sir Compton Domvile), and many more celebrities were on the Station, but I think the old *Ramillies* (first commission) holds the record for subsequent achievements of her officers. It was a most delightful commission in every way, both for Service efficiency and for good fellowship.

By that time the authorities had recognised that I ought to spend all my time on the Fleet Intelligence work. I lived on shore in the winter months at Malta near Admiralty House, sharing rooms with Lieutenant C. L. Napier (Rear-Admiral now), who was then in charge of the naval rifle-range at Ricasoli. I went to sea with the Admiral, and my only ship-work was to "spot" occasionally from the upper top during gun practice. The *Ramillies* carried a Major and a subaltern, who easily carried on the work of her detachment of Marines. I also attained to the dignity of an office of my own at sea. The wardroom was on the lower deck; abaft the wardroom was a bulkhead, and then a torpedo-tube to fire right astern; on each side of that tube was a tiny cabin, about the size of a good cupboard on shore, and one of these was allotted to me as an office the other as a cabin. It was a great boon to have some regular place in which to keep all the various Intelligence books, papers, and charts, which by that time were becoming voluminous; there was much trouble with the Admiralty if one was lost, and I remember a tale of a certain Captain

on a distant station. Having no appointed place to keep his secret and confidential papers, he determined to take no risks, so he sealed them all up in bread-bags until the end of the commission, when he returned them intact, and unread. A Commander-in-Chief naturally has many more papers than a Captain, and some of them much more secret. In the Mediterranean the tradition has always been that the British Admiral, besides commanding his fleet and supervising the naval establishments, must have some knowledge of the Foreign Policy of the Government. In time of peace his political work may be even more important than the purely naval work, and we can recall as an example the old Cretan problem, which puzzled the Chancelleries of Europe for many decades until it was settled in one day by an Admiral, Sir Gerard Noel, who bundled out the Turkish garrison. The work that came to the Intelligence Officer included interviewing Pressmen who came on board, or, rather, being interviewed by them. I remember once when the Fleet was approaching the anchorage at Gibraltar we were still going a good speed, when by some mistake the "Let go" (anchors) signal came down a short way before the "Stop engines" signal had been hauled down; the bottom of the sea slopes very steeply there, two ships let go their anchors, and one of them lost her cable! A Pressman, who had watched the Fleet coming in, arrived on board as soon as we anchored, and was passed down to me for an interview; he seemed satisfied when I told him that our Admiral

always approached an anchorage fast so as not to waste time, and he did not make "copy" out of the incident! I don't think he saw that cable parting.

At Gibraltar there was a chance of visiting Tangier, a place far more Eastern in atmosphere than any other coast town that we visited in the Mediterranean. The usual rebellion in the neighbourhood was going on at the time, and we watched a number of the loyal tribesmen doing their "powder-play" on the long beach to the eastward of the town, galloping along the sand, and letting off their rifles in the air, their loose white clothes flying back as they rode against the wind and showing sleeve linings of different colours. It was a fine spectacle, but we thought the entertainment too unhealthy for bystanders when one of them dropped, shot through the thigh by a "powder-player" as he galloped past. We also rode to Cape Spartel, and saw the lighthouse there; it was a pleasant ride; we particularly noticed the rich red soil, and wondered whether Morocco would ever settle down quietly and become the granary for Europe.

Mention of Gibraltar reminds me of an incident which covered me with shame at the time. It was not considered the right thing to fish over the side of the Mediterranean Flagship, though a certain number of men did so surreptitiously in the night watches, using black lines, so as to be less conspicuous. Near my cabin was an electric light, which shone down on the water close to the gangway. Fish used to collect in the light patch



of water, and I was hanging out of my port one evening angling for them, when I saw the Admiral and Flag-Captain a few yards off on the Mole exactly opposite. They walked on board, and a horrified messenger soon knocked at my door with a message about Marine officers who fished from their cabins.

Some of these incidents seem rather trivial, but they give a general idea of the play side of life in the Mediterranean Fleet, and somehow they remain in the memory when the monotony and disappointments of work, which sometimes loomed so largely in one's mind at the time, have been completely forgotten. Between 1893 and 1895 there was some doubt whether the Intelligence work should be officially recognised and put on a permanent footing and someone specially appointed to carry it on. The financial question was rather a stumbling-block, and the Treasury was not as approachable in such matters in those times as they are nowadays.

Before coming to the final result I cannot omit reference to our own efforts in the *Ramillies* for relieving the monotony of a long time spent at out-of-the-way places in the Levant in 1894. We got up a burlesque that we called "Beauty and the Beast," which was distinguished chiefly for topical songs and absence of plot. The caste is given on the opposite page.

Most of the performers have since risen to eminence, and I hear that some of the songs and the dialogue survive in the Fleet to the present day. One of the best hits was a song and dance

# BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

(H.M.S. "RAMILLIES.")

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Azor	{ <i>Hero, Prince, Naval Officer,</i> <i>and (incidentally) the Beast</i> }	..	COMMANDER JELlicoe.
Zimri	{ <i>a Turkish Merchant, and</i> <i>Heavy Father</i> }	..	LIEUTENANT CARR.
Mephisto,	<i>a Wicked Magician</i>	.. ..	CAPTAIN ASTON.
Razor,	<i>Officer of the Watch</i>	.. ..	LIEUTENANT PAINE.
Fairy Queen,	<i>a Regular Fizzer</i>	.. ..	MR. SINCLAIR.
Annar	{ <i>Zimri's Daughters, and</i>		LIEUTENANT LEVESON.
Mariar	{ <i>"Modern Women"</i> }		LIEUTENANT NICHOLSON.
Beauty	.. .. .	.. ..	MR. HORNELL.

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First Sentry	.. .. .	LIEUTENANT HEATH.
Signalman	.. .. .	MR. YOUNG.
Corporal	.. .. .	MR. NORTON.
Fairies	..	MESSRS. NASH, ORMSBY, BRIGGS, & FULLERTON.
Bluejackets	..	MESSRS. POLLARD, McLaurin, & MARTEN:
Marines	.. .. .	MESSRS. SHEARME & KIDDLE.

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*Music arranged by* MR. OLIVIERI.

Prompter	.. .. .	MR. FITCH.
Scenery, Properties, and Dresses		MESSRS. PICKTHORN & POOLE.
Stage Manager	.. .. .	EVERYBODY.
Musical Director	.. .. .	THE REMAINDER.

by the "Fairies," who were midshipmen in ordinary life; the smallest of them was Fairy Queen, "a regular fizzer," and the name "Fizzer" stuck to him for life. (He was Flag-Captain of light cruisers in the Great War.) He sang a song in high falsetto, and the chorus of fairies (very pretty girls to all appearances, dressed up in muslin and spangles by a French *modiste* at Smyrna, where we did some very shy shopping), broke in with a refrain sung in deep bass voices:

"We've ribbons and laces, and paint on our faces,  
And stockings right up to the knee—  
But by day in our trousers, we're regular rousers,  
We're Midshipmen in the Navee!"

Jellicoe took the part of the Beast, a midshipman (Hornell) the part of Beauty, and Leveson and Douglas Nicholson—both Admirals now—the parts of the elderly ugly sisters. Zimri, the heavy father (Lieutenant Carr) lost his life as Captain of an armed merchant cruiser in the War. H. L. Heath, afterwards the Lord of the Admiralty specially charged with the Royal Marine Forces, was a Marine sentry. After running the burlesque for the Fleet in the Levant we performed it again in Malta, where it went splendidly. Some of the Lords of the Admiralty had come out for another inspection of the establishments there, and they came to the performance. There was a topical verse in a parody of the comic song "That's all!" about which we were rather nervous. When war broke out between China and Japan strong reinforcements—the *Edgar*, *Æolus*, and *Spartan*—were sent from the Mediterranean to China, and

no cruisers were sent to the Mediterranean to take their place. Soon after, the defensive boom across the entrance to Malta harbour was completed by the addition of two ancient little gun-boats, to be moored in the channel to support the boom-hawsers. They were called the *Bullfrog* and *Firefly*. The verse ran:

“The Admiralty sent out some ships to Japan,  
*Chorus:* That’s all !

The *Edgar*, the *Æolus*, and the *Spartan*.  
*Chorus:* That’s all !

We want reinforcements, and so they took heed,  
 At once we were strengthened to fill up our need !  
 The *Bullfrog* and *Firefly* came out at full speed !  
*Chorus:* And that’s all !”

“Their Lordships” took it very nicely, and called for an encore.

I think the following account in the *Malta Chronicle* is worth preserving. It may remind the participators, who are now shouldering such heavy responsibilities, of their younger days, and interest the public in the antecedents of men who have since performed their parts on the world stage:

The piece is well sustained all through; it never flags. Each and all of the actors did his part right well. Commander Jellicoe, as hero, is a host in himself, and he is well supported by Beauty (Mr. Hornell); Lieutenants Leveson and Nicholson, as the two ugly sisters; Lieutenant Carr, who was first-rate as Zimri; Mr. Sinclair as the pretty Fairy Queen, and Captain Aston as Mephisto.

Memories of that burlesque are still very vivid. The boredom of the constant rehearsals, with or without music, conducted in a cramped space in

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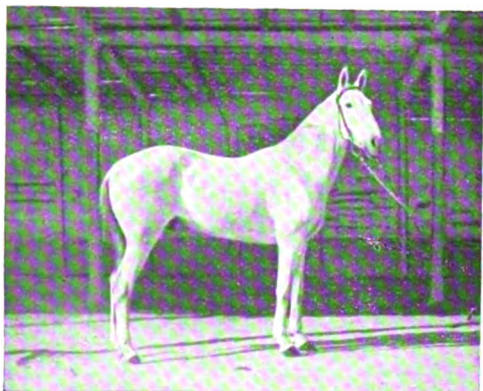
some stifflingly hot flat somewhere down in the bowels of the ship; the times when everything seemed to go wrong; the difficulty in getting everyone together to rehearse when so many were on duty, and those who were not wanted to go on shore; the minor troubles with electric lighting, costumes, and scenery (we got over that very simply: one scene was laid in the island of Lemnos, and we indicated the locality by a Turkish flag spread across the back of the stage and a stuffed red-legged partridge suspended by a string in the foreground). On the day of the first performance came a crowning disaster. The Quarter-deck awning in the *Ramillies* class was very low, so that there was no room for a raised stage underneath it. That was got over by raising the whole awning about eight feet; those who are familiar with the enormous spread and weight of a battleship's awnings will realise the feat of seamanship involved. Then the dialogue and jokes seemed to become increasingly foolish and banal with constant repetition at rehearsals, until we were amazed at the enthusiasm of the audience about them. Meeting the "Fairy Queen," just returned from a trip with a Light Cruiser Squadron to the Baltic, has brought it all back. When talking over old times I found that he could still repeat most of the dialogue after nearly twenty-five years, and in a railway carriage the next day I heard an Admiral quote from the dialogue, not knowing that I was the author.

I find I have not mentioned the Fleet regattas, which were a great feature of life up the Straits.

We held big ones, both for sailing and for pulling boats, about once a year; and at other times there were the weekly sailing races, and occasionally pulling matches between cutters or gigs of different ships. There was always much excitement about them, and they provided good exercise, with a competitive impulse which kept up the keenness handed down from the days of masts and yards, when the whole Fleet could see which ship was first to carry out an evolution. To give the men more exercise in each ship, physical training had been introduced in the Fleet. This was carried out to music, and we have since been told by experts that in the form we used to do it more harm than good was done to physical development; but all that has been changed now. When the ship was in dry dock the whole ship's company used to run round the dock, the band playing "Keel roll," or some other march, in double time. Jellicoe as Commander used to lead the way himself. He was famed for his physical agility and keenness. One of our forms of exercise to work off superfluous energy in the evenings took the form of hurdle-racing over chairs placed as obstacles across the *Half* deck (I refuse to be drawn into the old wardroom controversy about whether that ought to be spelt *Aft* deck). We called it "Half Deck Dog" because you had to go on all fours and land on your hands after every jump. Jellicoe always won. When at sea, the wardroom and gunroom generally held combined sports after evening quarters when we did not stop engines to bathe;

these took the form of "high-cock-a-lorum," "sling the monkey," or other games of our youth, and helped to keep us all young. Dancing the Lancers after dinner was another form of exercise, rather more strenuous than any other, as danced in the *Ramillies*; I don't know whether the band or the dancers got most excitement out of those evenings, they worked each other up. Those were the days when ships' bandsmen were chiefly Maltese or Italians, who joined for short service for the commission. They did no disciplinary training or courses to teach them to take any skilled part in fighting the ship, and the present system, introduced by Lord Fisher, is a great improvement. Most of them join as boys now, are under Marine discipline, and go through their training at the R.N. School of Music at Eastney. I am told that, taken as a whole, the general standard as musicians has also improved. One great advantage is that the officers no longer have to bear the whole cost of the instruments, clothing, music, and other expenses which used to hit us rather hard in the old days. In a Flagship a large share of the cost used to fall on the Admiral's pocket.

When at Malta the Polo attracted most attention, and we had various race meetings, "Skye" meetings, and gymkhana, which led to very keen competitions, life-long friendships, and much good feeling and acquaintanceships between the two Services. The Navy had two teams in the inter-regimental Cup competition, and one naval team got into the final on three successive years, but



A MALTA POLO PONY, 1895.  
Lieut. E. S. Alexander-Sinclair's "Waverley."



FLEET REGATTA: PINNACE WITH "FANCY RIG."  
Lieut. H. E. Sandeman, R.N., H.M.S. *Ramillies*, 1895.





failed to win it. During my last year we had a tremendous final match with a battalion of the 60th Rifles. It was played in a dust-storm in a gale of wind. At the beginning of the last "chukker" the score stood at 4—0 against us; we put on three goals, and the excitement was desperate when we just failed to get another one a minute before the bell rang. The team was Mark Kerr, Alexander-Sinclair, Godfrey Paine, and myself. I am afraid that I was the weak link in the team; I played at No. 1, and was outclassed by the Riflemen's back (J. R. Brownlow). After the match was over we had to hurry back to the harbour as the Fleet was going to sea; we only succeeded in securing an old "one-man" dghaisa<sup>1</sup> with a very aged oarsman, whose movements were deliberate; and our slow progress across the harbour with the Flagship waiting for us, the Admiral on the bridge, to slip from her buoy has always remained in my mind.

Polo reminds me of the last summer cruise for which I was in the Fleet. We were lying at Alexandria when an invitation arrived to send a naval team up to Cairo to play the Army, and we started at once, sorely handicapped by the loss of Alexander-Sinclair, who was down with fever. We reached Cairo in time for luncheon, and played in the afternoon; the thermometer stood at 110° in the shade, so it was strenuous work. The Bays, who had recently come to Egypt after winning the big Polo Cup in India, had three men playing, and the other was of similar form, so

Maltese shore-boat.

we were somewhat outclassed. I don't think that any of us had played on rather slippery grass before, which added to our handicap; on the Malta ground there was no grass in those days, the surface was to all intents and purposes hard stone, on which you could hear the hoofs rattling, but stone on which ponies seemed to get a grip so that you could swing them round sharply when going almost full speed. We were lent twenty-four good ponies at Cairo to choose from, and everyone was most hospitable and friendly. The humorous incident of the day, which came near to a tragedy, was when I was "riding off" the man playing back for the Army, and my borrowed pony got hold with his teeth of a loose fold in the other man's breeches, which he nearly tore off. We scored our only goal while they were playing a man short, but lost in the end by about 7—1. After a great dinner at the Turf Club we caught the night train back to Alexandria, without seeing the Pyramids or any of the sights at or near Cairo!

Soon after that came the end for me of those times up the Straits in the nineties. Malta fever had been rampant in the Fleet; numbers, especially midshipmen, had gone down with it, but so far I had escaped. We had all sorts of theories about its cause, amongst other things we thought it came on through not wrapping up well when coming off to the ship about sunset in the officers' boat, so the coxswain always arrived laden with heavy coats for all officers who were on shore. We also thought that it was dangerous to drink

“shore water,” so we used to ruin ourselves in buying soda-water from England, sold at five-pence a bottle by the messman. That was before the days when some wise Government spent £50,000 on research, which resulted in the Malta fever germ being located in goats’ milk, and many hundreds of thousands, probably millions, of pounds, were saved by preserving the health of our seamen and soldiers. I don’t know whether the messman gave us goats’ milk at Alexandria, but when we were cruising along the Syrian coast a few days afterwards, down some of us went, including myself, with Malta fever. At the same time an Admiralty mail arrived with the news that the Intelligence and Staff work of preparing for war in the Mediterranean Fleet was to be put on a permanent footing. An Order in Council had been obtained, extra pay at six shillings a day was to be granted, and the officer who had succeeded me in the Naval Intelligence Department of the Admiralty was leaving England at once to take over the work. Bacon in one of his essays called *Nunc Dimittis* the “sweetest canticle,” and I confess to a sigh of satisfaction at the feeling that the back of the work had been broken, and my breakdown in health would not affect its continuity. Moreover, their Lordships had been pleased to decree that the new allowance should be retrospective to cover one of my three years of work. Losses in the *Victoria* and out-of-pocket expenses had by that time left me somewhat in debt, so the announcement was good news for my long-suffering tailor.

Of the last days in the *Ramillies* there is little to write. I suppose I was rather seriously ill (as a matter of fact, I have never been quite as strong since), and I remember only that I was just well enough to get the papers in order for the new man to take over while I could grasp their contents. The last I saw of my shipmates was a row of friendly faces looking over the side as I was lowered in a cot into a cutter to be taken on board the *Humber* from Budrum, where we were lying, to Malta. Jellicoe came to see me in the *Humber*. She was full of serious cot cases, and had no ice on board. The *Hood* had a refrigerating machine, and he went to her in his gig at once, and got back with a splendid load for me, just in time—the anchor was up, and the gangway ladder was being hauled in. A charming farewell signal from the Admiral completed my contentment, and I remember little more of the voyage excepting that the nurse who attended me was the best I have known, a midshipman (Cyril Ward) on his way to England to pass for Lieutenant. Transport to Malta Hospital; the few days there; movement, very early in the morning, fortified with a strong brandy-and-soda, to a cabin in a P. and O. steamer in Sliema harbour, a coal-shoot with coals rattling down it running through my cabin; lying for hours in the coal-dust and maddening rattle till the vessel started; all that seems now like a nightmare. Once past “Gib” recovery began in the fresher Atlantic air, but that was no longer “Up the Straits” in the nineties.

## CHAPTER VIII

### GREENWICH COLLEGE AND EASTNEY IN THE NINETIES

*"Thus does Science rule the revels that our Fathers used to  
know,  
While the sea, that bred our Fathers, marks the fashions come  
and go,  
Humours each, but sometimes wonders if the Truth were better  
sought  
In the latest words of Science, or the deeds our Fathers wrought."*  
OUR FATHERS.

MALTA, or Mediterranean, fever is an insidious disease which is cured only by time, if at all. After being laid low by it up the Straits in 1895 I felt fairly fit on arrival in England, but was soon smitten down again, and I was quite unfit for work for six months. Then came an offer of an educational appointment at the Royal Naval College at Greenwich. I must confess to having hesitated before accepting it. At the Admiralty and in the Mediterranean I had had the good luck to be given constructive work to do in establishing what are now large departments of the Naval Staff, in the Admiralty and in the Fleet; I suppose that this luck had spoilt me for the time being for doing anything less interesting; I had not the sense to realise then the importance of educational work. The general attitude of the young towards the average "school-master" of those days was one of critical toler-

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ance, if not of open hostility, and having had more experience of active service in war than my contemporaries, I suppose it was natural that my ambition should lie in the direction of a life of action and adventure rather than towards teaching. Health settled the question. Nelson once wrote in a private letter to a friend that the great thing in all military service is health, and that it is easier for an officer to keep his men healthy than it is for a doctor to heal them. I had not succeeded in keeping myself fit for any abnormal exposure to weather or strain, and the medical faculty were quite positive on the subject—they would not pass me for any such work.

The appointment at Greenwich bore the imposing title of "Professor of Fortification." It carried with it a fine old house in the East Wing of the College, overlooking the river, a lawn-tennis court crossed by the Meridian of Greenwich Longitude 0, and a modest salary of £400 a year, less income tax and mess subscriptions, etc. The large house was rather a white elephant to a bachelor until I conceived the idea of converting the ground-floor into a sort of sporting club for young officers. Especially in the winter months, Greenwich is a bad place for outdoor recreation, and not much of a spot in which to have the care of from forty to sixty youths, ranging from seventeen to nineteen years of age, with plenty of animal spirits. On half holidays a certain number could play football or cricket according to the time of year, but there was not much to do between study (4 p.m.) and dinner-

time, especially in winter, so we converted my big drawing-room and dining-room into boxing and fencing saloons, and started classes. They were a great success, and we turned out some boxers, both light and middleweight, who did well in the Aldershot Navy and Army competitions. After dinner we had dancing classes, getting an instructress and pianist down from Mrs. Wordsworth's in London, and we managed to get a few girls, keen on dancing, to come and join in the teaching occasionally. The wife of the Captain of the College (Captain Pipon, R.N., one of the best sportsmen in the Navy) was good enough to preside over the revels as chaperon.

I remember my first “pi-jaw” lecture being received with enthusiasm when I told the class that they must “never let their studies interfere with their legitimate amusements”; but there was a doubtful moment when I added that we might disagree about what amusements were legitimate. I gathered from the first week's experience that a large proportion had left public schools for some time in order to be crammed for the entry examinations, and that, unless given some form of counter-attraction, the delights of “bar-loafing” might appeal to them as a legitimate relief from the sheer boredom of being filled up with more of the dull facts demanded by the examiner of those days. Really they had to get through a pretty stiff course in military subjects, taught by lectures and such practical work as we had facilities for. The lectures began immediately after breakfast, and I soon found that the



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classes were only half awake, so followed the experience gained in a ship in dock, when our Commander (Jellicoe) used to run the crew round and round the ship after "Divisions," and I sent the class for a run in double time round the College (about a quarter of a mile) every morning before lectures began. Thereby hangs a tale of one of the classes. Owing to illness one morning there was no one to run them round but myself, and they evidently got their heads together to get a rise out of their middle-aged Professor. I thought they were making the pace mysteriously hot, so I took it easy, running well inside their track and cutting the corners. They sprinted during the last hundred yards or so, and were horrified at not being halted at the usual place. A second lap round the whole course brought them (and me) in somewhat exhausted, but I had just enough breath to halt them, and deliver the usual morning discourse.

We used to run discipline on those lines, and it worked out very well. I remember another example of a want of grasp of the fact that "teachers" were themselves young once. A member of the class failed to turn up at lecture one morning, and sent me a telegram to say he had had a slight accident when stepping into a train. He sent another one in identical terms to the companion who had been with him on leave on the previous evening, and that companion brought it to me. If he had not sent the second wire no questions would have been asked; but it was obvious there must be something more

behind an incident that required describing by telegram to an eye-witness ! Investigation proved that one of the "legitimate amusements" was to walk on the footboard from one compartment to another when returning from London by train, and this particular malefactor had fallen off on the line somewhere near London Bridge Station, being rescued from a passing train by a gallant porter and taken to Guy's Hospital. I can only remember having four disciplinary cases to deal with altogether in three and a half years. The other two may also be worth mentioning; one was an individual case, the other a collective one. There was a tradition amongst youth at Greenwich that the 5th of November was a day for letting off fireworks in the College. The particular method adopted afforded some excitement. A squib or rocket was launched from a window at one end of the College; the police raided the quarters from which it appeared, and found all in order, the occupant asleep in bed; then a volley of rockets appeared from windows in another block afar off, and so on, *da capo*. The strategy was good, and difficult to counter, but the Captain of the College said we had to stop it somehow, as there was real danger of fire to the valuable old buildings. On the morning of November 6th the mildest youth of all my class was reported by the police as having launched fireworks from his window, which they had identified carefully. The evidence was overwhelming as affecting the window, not so as affecting the youth. Thinking of Solomon's methods

(and Sancho Panza's) of administering justice, I paraded all the classes, stood out the "accused," explained the heinousness of his crime, and "gated" him for the remainder of the year, adding that I was obliged to assume he was the delinquent in the absence of evidence to the contrary (!). My hopes were fulfilled; out stepped the real delinquent, said, "I did it, sir," was told not to do it again, and the incident closed with honours easy. There were no more fireworks, which was the main object.

The other (collective) disciplinary case was chiefly my own fault; collective cases of opposition to authority can generally be attributed either partly or wholly to the authority concerned. There was a rule that during the examinations young Marine officers must go to their study and work on afternoons when no papers were set for them; the rule did not apply to anyone else in the College, and I had intended to get it cancelled, but forgot. One afternoon—it was the last day but one of the term—I suddenly remembered that there was no examination going on, so thought I had better stroll round to the study in case there should be a perfectly excusable riot. I was met on my way up the stairs by a stream of water, in size not unworthy of comparison with a small trout-stream. There were scaling-ladders against the passage windows to the study, and a row of small fire-engines outside the door. The long rows of tables were occupied by the most unnaturally studious looking youths I have ever encountered. The fire-engines had constantly

been the subject of controversy with the police because the pressure ran down when they were used, and that left them unfit for a real emergency; the practice of using them as weapons had to be checked somehow, so I sat down and wrote letters at my table for the whole afternoon to keep the class in, and then, appearing to see them with surprise for the first time, mentioned that there was no need to be in the study that day. A sheepish-looking crowd filtered out of the room, and the fire-engines were afterwards left in peace.

The acting sub-lieutenants R.N. only came to the College for about six weeks, and seemed to have to compress within that compass the amount of learning that other youths of the same class of life take years to acquire; their whole career depended upon the result, so they were too hard worked to be normally hilarious for their years. On the rare occasions when they did break out I have known much originality displayed in dodging the resultant punishment of "gating." One youth (an old shipmate of mine as a midshipman up the Straits), who had been gated, broke bounds and went off to London one evening, coming down by a late train. All junior officers had to sign their names at the police lodge at the main gate after 10 p.m., but senior officers were excused this indignity. The resourceful sub. selected at the station a cab driven by an oldish man with a beard and rather a red face, resembling that of a Senior Captain then at the College. He hired the cab, made the driver get inside, got on the box, and drove triumphantly through the

College gates muffled up in the cabby's coat, drove to his quarters, and then resigned the box to the cabby.

But to pass from disciplinary methods to other matters. I found a great change from the time when I had been at the College twenty years before as a youngster. In those days there were very few of us (only candidates for the Marine Artillery went to Greenwich, the Light Infantry did their training elsewhere). The result was that we did not form a clique for ourselves, but mixed with the naval officers, and so became imbued at an impressionable age with the traditions of the Naval Service. Between 1895 and 1899 both R.M.A. and R.M.L.I. went to Greenwich, the former for two years, the latter for one, and at one time there were as many as sixty-six in the classes. The result was that they formed a society of their own, and the old practice of intermingling with the Navy broke down. I tried hard to get things mended by sending young Marine officers to sea before joining the R.N. College, but "traditions" was too strong against me, and the scheme fell through for the time.

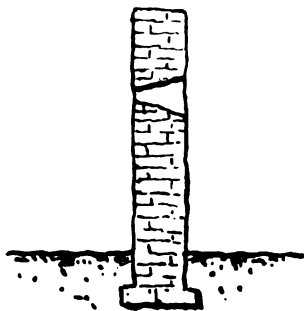
The instructional work was very strenuous, and during the first few months, until I had shaken off the after effects of Malta fever, I had to spend most of my time in bed when not teaching. I remember one notable occasion, when, standing on a dais lecturing to senior naval officers about the defence of naval bases, or some such subject, I had occasion to stoop in order to pull up one of the big slates (they worked in pairs with sashes

like windows) and found myself on my hands and knees with such bad lumbago that I could not get up! It took two of the audience to lift me and prop me up against the rostrum to finish my discourse!

The subjects I had to teach the young, besides fortification, field and permanent, which my title denoted, were tactics, strategy, surveying (with theodolite, sextant, and level), topography (military map making by rough and ready methods), military law, theory of artillery, and infantry drill. They worked on Mr. Squeers' principle of "clean winder"; a lecture first, then practical work based upon it. With a class of forty that meant forty sketches and forty tactical schemes to be looked over, besides forty test-papers on the work done every week. That was in addition to delivering daily lectures, sometimes as many as three in a day, on the various subjects enumerated, and the practical individual instruction of all the classes. The naval lieutenants qualifying for gunnery also came to me for fortification, and the senior naval officers for special lectures, so life was fairly full.

I had learned so little by my own experience that I am ashamed to say that it took me many months to learn the secret of all education, that no one can teach anyone else anything, he can only teach him how to learn it. These test-papers were a great education to me; they taught me the mental attitude of the average men in the class, and whether the right impression had been conveyed to them. I remember one amusing experi-

ence of a question after a lecture on the defence of walls. This is the sort of picture given in the textbook, and I dilated on the subject:



The section of the wall, as may be noticed, is taken through a loophole. The first enquiry after I had drawn the diagram on the black board was: "I beg your pardon, sir, but how does the top of the wall stop on?" It was an eye-opener to me about the mental attitude of a virgin mind towards a new subject; I had not thought it necessary to explain that a loophole was not a continuous slit extending the whole length of the wall! We did our practical work in such country as we could reach within the amount of money allowed for travelling, and we had a bit of ground walled off Greenwich Park for digging trenches, gun-pits, and dug-outs, and for making military bridges. The classes were very big for the work in the country, and I found a tendency to follow the "teacher" like sheep instead of thinking for themselves. This tendency was cured, once for all, by the following experiment. I gave the class instructions in writing to make a report on the road running north from New Eltham Station; I

got out of the train, walked about a mile or so due south, sat on a gate, and lighted a pipe. The whole class walked past me and wandered on until one of them became doubtful, read the instructions, consulted his map and the position of the sun, and walked back, looking foolish. The whole class then did the same, and looked carefully in the opposite direction as they went by me, still sitting on my gate. I suppose that all teachers have to combat the "sheep" attitude in their classes. It is important to do so in training for active service, as I found in the South African War, to be described in due course.

Besides trying to encourage individual thought in small things we taught military subjects on a system which was thought to be rather startling in those days. I had suffered myself from a process of education which enforced all sorts of dull and soulless detailed routine work—learning by heart pages of Latin verse, having no knowledge of the sense; performing tricks with long and short syllables to fit them into hexameters and pentameters without the too obvious use of "*nam*," "*jam*," "*nunc*," and such-like convenient monosyllables, to fill up gaps (on the lines of the celebrated "*Hectore pectore nam tundere fundere jam*"); learning tables of dates in history, and, later in life, masses of uninspiring details and dimensions affecting the military art. I had an idea that the young mind is generally more inspired by big thoughts than by little ones. At the same time, of course, there is the idea of disciplining the mind, and training it for a hard grind in



research or routine, or whatever may be required in one's walk in life. It seemed to me that dull work might be done better if the general purpose of it, and how it fitted into the big pattern, were understood. I am afraid that I have explained the idea rather inadequately, and have taken a long time to come to the point, which is this: Instead of first making the class learn by heart the dimensions of a pick and shovel, for instance, I began by a general talk on the conduct of war, the importance of forces that move, such as fleets and armies, in the scheme of affairs; then the help that the art of fortification can give to such forces; then the nature of different sorts of defence works; and so round to the dimensions of a shelter trench, which we then proceeded to dig with the aforesaid picks and shovels, finishing up by putting tin boxes in the badly dug parts of the trench, and shooting them with a rifle through the inadequate bits of parapet, dug by the slackest of the diggers, to show them the effect of scamping a dull job in warfare. That was the sort of idea, and it seemed to work well. We tried to look upon war as one big subject, showing how armies, fleets, food, trade, and finance, fitted into the whole pattern, and it was surprising how well the routine work was done when its bearing on the whole scheme was grasped.

Most of them seemed to be inspired by the idea, and I had the luck to come across several specially keen students of the profession they were joining. Maurice Hankey was one of them; he became Secretary to the War Cabinet, the governing body

that helped so much to win the War when things were at their worst, and I have sometimes hoped that through him the form of education we tried at Greenwich in the nineties may have had some influence on world history. Several important folk, some of them of Cabinet rank, have told me that he did wonderful work in helping to co-ordinate the vast effort that led to our ultimate success.

Amongst the amusements not yet referred to were the annual sports in the spring. I remembered them in former days when I had been a student at the College, and the interest taken in them, so was surprised to find that they had been in abeyance for about seven years; but we managed to get them re-established, and they were a great success. I was much chaffed myself for winning the veteran's race, a 220 yard handicap by age; the reason for the chaff was that the prize was one of the best of all, a travelling clock, and I had allotted them, really quite innocently, as I had never won a race before in my life.

There were large numbers in the Greenwich College mess in those years, and as it was the only such mess in the Navy we tried occasionally to entertain on a scale worthy of the Service. We used to invite the members of the Fishmongers' Company, amongst others, and gave them white-bait when that delicacy was out of season; it used once to be the function of the Company to stop such illicit doings! King George dined with us when he was Duke of York. He came to the billiard-room after dinner, and we suggested a

game of pool; when the balls had been served out, the marker (an old servant of the College, who also acted as umpire and groundman for cricket) came up and said to me in a whisper that could be heard all over the room: "I beg your pardon, sir, but ought I to call him 'His Royal Highness' or 'Spot Yellow'?" (that being the ball that had fallen to his share).

My appointment was for three years; my predecessors, being married men, had generally been granted an extension of two years, but when I had finished my time I asked to be relieved, and after I had been kept on for six months my successor was appointed.

On one of the last evenings of the term I had the most difficult disciplinary case to deal with I have ever had in my life. Going to dress for dinner I found on my dressing-table a wonderful split-cane fly-rod and reel, the sort of things I had dreamed of possessing, but far out of the reach of my pocket. There was a card on them explaining that they were farewell gifts from the class, which was one of the best that I had put through in the three and a half years. There was also a paragraph in the Queen's Regulations to the effect that all collective expressions of approval or gifts by juniors to seniors in the Service were strictly forbidden! There was, again, the fact that it was my business to teach them the Queen's Regulations, and an ounce of practice is worth many tons of theory in such matters. That was the problem to be solved. It took me an hour and a half to word a letter returning the gift to

the senior man in the class, and then I was not satisfied with it. We were on sufficiently confidential terms for me to ask him afterwards what had happened to the rod. They had raffled it amongst the subscribers, and it had fallen to one who, not being a fisherman, allowed me to buy it at cost price. I don't know what I should have done if he had refused; to add to the love of fishing an association like that with one's rod was too much pleasure to be expected to forego! I have had twenty years' hard work out of that rod; it has caught many trout, and one six-pound salmon. With the reel, also much coveted, I had less luck; it was won in the raffle by an enthusiastic fisherman, who was unwilling to part with it on similar terms. The sequel to the story was that I met a highly placed official from the Royal Marine office, the Headquarters Staff of my corps, a few days afterwards, and told him the whole story. "Couldn't you have dodged the regulations, my good fellow?" was his only comment.

The passing-out class evidently forgave me the lesson in the regulations, as I was bidden by them to a final dinner they were having together in a private room of a London Hotel. After many speeches we finished the evening with Swedish drill round the dinner-table. That was in July, and it was proposed that my successor should be appointed from the end of the term, which would mean that he would begin his appointment with two months' holiday; but I succeeded in securing that holiday for myself, and spent it partly in

Brittany, writing a short history of the Benin campaign, which I had long promised to do, and partly in Scotland.

Those were the early days of examinations for promotion to the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel, and I had applied to go up directly I had been made a Major, which happened in 1898, after about nineteen years' service; it was as well to get on the long waiting list as soon as possible. There was a paper test and two practical tests in the field, one to handle a battalion in action, the other to handle a small mixed force, cavalry, artillery, and infantry. I did not expect to be summoned for several years, but while in Scotland a telegram arrived ordering me to Aldershot the next day but one to be examined. There was one serious difficulty, how to get uniform riding-breeches, as I had not any accessible. I was reminded of one of our middle-aged captains in the old days who was requested by an examining Board to "get on a horse and drill a battalion." He protested. "No," he said, "one thing at a time, please; I'll drill the battalion, and then I'll get on a horse and you shall see me ride!" I did not want to turn out in any substitute for the correct riding-breeches before a critical Aldershot Board, so hastened to my tailor for such requirements, and demanded a pair. It was then about 2 p.m., and I said I must have them by nine the next morning (he usually took about three weeks). Of course he protected that he could not do it, until I said: "Then please make one leg, and I'll get another tailor to make the other, and you can sew them together." This seemed to appeal to him, and

on my promising to subsidise two of his men to sit up all night, he undertook the contract, and kept his word. Like the fishing-rod, I have those breeches still. They fitted admirably !

I had been told that the only thing the examining Board cared about was that a candidate should keep his head and not get “rattled.” On the day when I was handling a mixed force I was winning my battle comfortably by keeping my infantry together, while my opponent had fallen into an obvious trap and divided his forces; as the battle had drifted into a wood I had no use for my guns, and had forgotten all about them. Suddenly an agitated galloper arrived with a message that they were in a valley, and the enemy’s dismounted cavalry were shooting at them from the neighbouring hills. One of the examining Board, a cavalry Colonel, was evidently watching me, so I was determined not to get excited about it, and asked, “Is there an umpire there ?” The excited messenger said, “No, sir.” So I remarked quietly, “Then let them shoot,” and went on with the battle. I passed with flying colours, being awarded the highest qualification of “Very Good.” Sir Neville Lyttelton was President, and Henry Wilson of the Rifle Brigade, now well known to fame, was Brigade-Major on the Board.

Aldershot was full of talk about South Africa just then (September, 1899), and of the prospects of war with the Boers of the Transvaal. There seemed to be no quarrel at all with the Orange Free State. On October 1st, or thereabouts, I

joined the R.M.A. at Eastney for regimental duty. A few days later war broke out with the Boers.

Before passing to the months spent at the R.M.A. Headquarters in 1899, I must add a few more words about the notes upon my time at the Royal Naval College, which I have just read over again. I am afraid they convey the idea that I took credit for inventing the system of education described, but I did not intend to do anything so foolish. Most people who are charged with education realise that the young rejoice in wide subjects until they have got into grooves, and such folk teach a big pattern first, they then show how the grooves fit into it, and so make them more interesting; I happened by bad luck never to come across that type of educator myself when I was young. My classical masters never inspired, and never conveyed any idea of the wide interest in human affairs that classical study opens up. It was all spade-work, learning lines of Latin by heart, and fitting syllables into Latin verses, without planting anything on the soil prepared by the spade-work. The idea conveyed was that Latin was not a language used for the conveyance of great ideas, but a sort of jigsaw puzzle of long and short syllables to be fitted into hexameters and pentameters. Perhaps it was because I missed the last year, the most valuable, at a public school, that such a poor opinion remains of the system of those days. It was intended no doubt to lead up to a University education, which I missed. In recalling the ups and downs of life in various employments in different parts of the world the humorous inci-

dents and good times far eclipse everything else. Of public school days, on the other hand, I do not retain a single pleasant remembrance, though I know it is heresy to make such a confession. I can tell at once when visiting my old school that it is a different place altogether under Dr. Gow's wise guidance from what it was forty years ago. I was probably a most objectionable youth, or I should have had more pleasant memories of the place. I must ask some contemporary about this when next I meet one.

But to get back to my narrative. I had always kept touch with my corps and old friends therein, so in a way it seemed like going home when I rejoined the R.M.A. at Eastney during the first month of the South African War. It did not take long to pick up the barrack routine again, or to revise the many sorts of drill with sea and land ordnance, infantry drill, and so on. The system there was admirable; in fact, so good in its way, that to spend more than a year there as a field officer without any responsibility was about as soul-killing an experience as it is possible to devise. You were a cog in a wonderful machine, and all you had to do was to be in the right place at the right time to fit in with the other cogs. Apart from revising my knowledge of drill I don't think that my duties could have occupied on an average more than about two hours a day. They consisted chiefly in inspecting and sampling bread, and sitting on Boards to survey clothing, equipment, and every conceivable sort of store or supply, from a broom-handle to a truss of hay or a steamboat. It was, of course, necessary to



have a number of senior officers of Marines, or there would be no promotion for the juniors; but there was very little for the seniors to do, and what there was had to be shared amongst them. The care with which stock was taken of all stores was phenomenal. Boards of officers certified to the number of feet, and fractions of a foot, of sewing-cotton left on the reels in the master tailor's shop, and the greatest care was taken that everything that was condemned as unfit for use should be properly disposed of. The great point was to adhere to the wording of the reports of former Boards, because any departure from the former wording might catch the eye of the Authority to whom the reports of the Boards were sent, and an explanation might be asked for. It was much safer to stick to the wording sanctified by former success, as the Commandants did not relish having the Board reports returned for explanations when once they had been signed and forwarded. Once upon a time, for instance, certain buckets were made of wood, and if unserviceable were condemned for firewood. They were replaced by metal pails, which were still "condemned for firewood" for many years.

At the end of the form to be signed by the whole Board of Officers was a sort of oath that they, in the presence of each other, and so on, had actually witnessed the destruction by fire, or whatever it was, of what they had decided should be so destroyed. Thereby hangs rather a good tale of a time, a few years later, when I was no less a man than the Authority who checked

the Board reports at the Marine office in London. An R.M. Division sent up one of them with the usual certificate of destruction signed by all the talent, a Lieutenant-Colonel, a Major, a Captain, and a Quartermaster or Barrackmaster, and countersigned by the Commandant. As they ought not to have destroyed stores of that special sort at all, but sent them to Deptford for sale, I had to send a note back to that effect. Only too willing to oblige, the reply of the Board came back by return of post: "This has now been done!"

First and foremost Eastney was a magnificent training establishment, but senior officers had little or nothing to do with the training work. In the Army, Lieutenant-Colonels and Majors have plenty of such work to do, as they command units, and are responsible to the authorities for the training and efficiency for war of those units, but at an R.M. Division the senior officers held no command or responsibility of any kind in the days of which I write, and all the training was entrusted to gunnery instructors and adjutants.

The output in splendidly trained individual men was admirable, but for officers above company rank, who had nothing to do either with training or command, the outlook was bleak and monotonous. A seniority corps is like a sort of moving staircase; nothing but the most successful specialisation in incompetence or in alcohol can interfere with your prospects of moving up gradually; whether you reach each higher rank is purely a question of luck in arriving there before being caught by an "age-clause." As one's old wardroom mates would have put it, all

you have to do is to "sit on your (what people generally sit upon) and let the wind blow you along," and about ten years of such soul-killing procedure generally intervened between the ranks of Major and Commandant in barracks.

This wordy disquisition is really leading up to an apology. My whole Service training had taught me to do what I was told, and take things as they came, but once (in 1899) I broke the rule. I felt that a cast-iron barrack routine, admirable as it was, afforded an atmosphere that was most wholesome to pass through, but not to linger in. I also thought that, if ever the powers that be did send me on active service with responsibility for human life, then, though I had deluded an Aldershot examining Board into the belief that I could handle the three arms in the field, I had not deluded myself into that belief. There was a great and fleeting chance of gaining experience in South Africa, and I hoped that I had recovered enough from the Mediterranean illness to be able to stand plenty of strain. I asked, not through official channels, which I knew to be a dead-end, but through private friends in power, to be sent to South Africa. Within a week (it was Black Week, in December, 1899, the week of Colenso, of Stormberg, and of Magersfontein) a wire came, on a Thursday evening, announcing that I had been selected to go out to South Africa as a special service officer, and another wire from a friend in the War Office adding that a transport was leaving Southampton on the Saturday morning, and I could go by that if I could be ready. I just caught that transport.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE SOUTH AFRICAN WAR

*Do not win through an African jungle, unmentioned at home  
in the Press?*

*Heed it not . . .*

(Law of the Navy.)

Just before we left Southampton in a British India liner, used as a transport, on Saturday, December 15th, 1899, we received the news of the third disaster of "Black Week." Our fortunes were at their lowest ebb just then, and the European Press was gloating over our discomfiture. The three set-backs of the week were Colenso, Stormberg, and Magersfontein. The transport carried about 1,400 men as drafts to fill up the ranks of different battalions which had lost heavily since the outbreak of war. The officer commanding troops on board was Maude, who earned undying fame in Mesopotamia, where he gave his life in the Great War; he was then a Major in the Coldstream Guards, and a few days senior to me, so to him fell the privilege of a big cabin with its own bathroom, and responsibility for the discipline and voluminous paper work that falls on such occasions upon the "O.C. troops," every embarkation and disembarkation return having to be rendered in quadruplicate to the authorities concerned.

The voyage passed without much incident. We tried to keep the men amused and in good training by sports, a swimming bath on deck, and such-like devices, and we invented a novel system of musketry training, using a bottle as a target, tied to the tail of a kite towed astern. We arrived at Las Palmas on a Sunday, and found that the natives generally employed in coaling had struck, or, rather, that they had realised that owing to our war they could make enough money in one day to keep them for a week; being philosophers, with no desire to become capitalists, they saw no reason for working more than one day in seven, and we did not happen to hit on the right day. Luckily there was a British cruiser in port. One of her Lieutenants had been an old shipmate of mine in the *Ramillies* up the Straits, the one referred to in a former chapter as having acted well in the part of "Beauty" in our burlesque (he was then what ladies with no relatives in the Navy call a "middy," an expression unknown in the sea Service, and is now a dignified Captain of a battleship). Whether through his influence or otherwise, the cruiser played up well, and sent working-parties to coal us. The troops on board helped too, and our voyage was not much delayed by the philosophy of the local native coaling-parties.

We spent Christmas Day at sea, just as we were passing through the latitudes of gorgeous sunsets and atmospheric effects. I have been the trip about a dozen times altogether, but remember nothing to equal one of the December

evenings on that particular voyage. The sea was indigo, with wavelets tipped with gold. The sky mostly rose colour and pale green, with bars of gold near where the sun was disappearing. Some islands in sight were brilliant rose-colour, and close to the ship were shoals of porpoises or dolphins (I never can be sure which are which), plunging gracefully along, showing copper-coloured sides, their back fins glistening gold as they caught the light. But after Ruskin's word-painting no one else would venture to try to put a sunset into words, so I will forbear.

When we tied up alongside the wharf in Table Bay the first business to be got through was to report at the General's office. We had heard during the voyage that Lord Roberts and a large army were to come out soon to retrieve the situation, and we knew that to win was only a matter of time. British wars in those days nearly always followed the same course. We were unprepared, and we sent out too weak a force at first for the task to be accomplished. That force was severely handled, and sometimes met with disaster. We then made up our minds to see things through, and sent out strong enough forces to make certain of success. In 1899 we made another rather serious error in not grasping the difficulty which men on their feet would experience in trying to catch mounted men who knew every bit of the country. The "dismounted men preferred" cable to the Dominions when they offered assistance is now a matter of history.

Cape Town was a depressing spot in January,

1900; even soldiers were going about there expressing the opinion that our task was hopeless. Calling at the Headquarters office, I was told my appointment, and got away from Cape Town as soon as I could. I was to be "Staff Officer to the Assistant-Inspector-General of the Western Lines of Communication," which ran from Cape Town, through De Aar, across the Orange River to Lord Methuen's force at Modder River. The distance from the Cape to De Aar is five hundred miles, and the nearer to the front the cheerier people were. Close to Modder River we saw from the train windows an excited crowd watching a football match between two battalions, almost within gunfire of the Boer lines.

De Aar was my chief's headquarters. At first the principal business was to find out where the British troops in Cape Colony were, General Headquarters being in Natal, with the bulk of the army trying to relieve Ladysmith; and to clear blocks of railway-trucks out of sidings at various places on the six hundred miles of line for which we were responsible. The Naval Brigade at Modder River were the worst offenders. They had some trucks loaded up with lyddite, and no magazines to store it in, so refused to give them up for a long time, but we made them disgorge in the end, as idle rolling stock held up the supplies for the troops. The guarding of those hundreds of miles of line was a big responsibility; the railway behind the army was like a pipe behind a diver, if it were cut the whole army would collapse. Every yard of the line was patrolled constantly

by platelayers. Troops held the stations and the principal bridges, but there were plenty of people living along the line who were unsympathetic, let us say, with the British cause, and if they had all combined against us the South African War might still be going on. Although the Boer strategy of invading Natal before we could get out enough troops to hold back the invaders was very effective from the purely military point of view, it also had the effect of conveying to the Dutch of Cape Colony the idea that the Boers were the aggressors, and of alienating sympathy from them. There were a few "rebels" then in arms, and sympathy with the Boer cause was sometimes expressed; we had to put up with many pin-pricks, such as demonstrations by youths coming in *Vierkleur* ties and hat-ribbons to jeer at the troop trains going through the stations, and so on.

After we had had a few weeks' breathing space to get things in order Lord Roberts and Lord Kitchener arrived, and work became strenuous.

The need for mounted men had been grasped, and the urgency of the need, so it was a question of extemporising and doing many things that would not have been done if there had been more time. Horses quite out of condition after voyages from the Argentine and from Canada, the Canadians still carrying their winter coats in the sweltering heat of a South African summer, were hastened up country. Men in infantry battalions who said they could ride were collected, put upon horses, and called Mounted Infantry; within a



few weeks they were in action, and trying to out-manceuvre some of the best horse-masters for long-distance work in the world. The idea to be conveyed was that a big advance was intended from Colesberg along the railway up the centre to Bloemfontein, and, considering how many sympathisers with the Boer cause there were amongst us, the secret was wonderfully well kept about the real movement from Enslin and Graspan on Paardeberg to cut off Cronje's force investing Kimberley. De Aar was the principal railway junction through which everything had to pass, and only two people there, my chief and myself, knew the secret. The great thing was to get things done, and not to bother too much about red tape or regulations, of which we had a few interesting examples.

Everything for the field army had to be taken across one bridge over the Orange River; it was a railway bridge, with high girders on each side of the track. One hundred and eighty ox-waggons had to pass over between the trains, and one of them met a train going at a fair speed, the poor team being squeezed out through the lattice-work of the great girders of the bridge. A few days afterwards we received a furious telegram from a high official asking why we had not assembled a Board of Survey to report on the condition and disposal of the oxen!

The climax in the work came when detailed instructions arrived about the big and complicated movement. Lord Roberts' army from the Cape had to be moved to Orange River and beyond,

all through De Aar; troops scattered about to the eastward, including Sir John French's force from Colesberg, had to be moved to the same destination, also through De Aar, and troops from Modder River were sent to Colesberg to deceive the enemy. It was a regular jigsaw puzzle in Staff work. All messages came and went in the most clumsy cipher I have ever encountered. You had a dictionary with very small and bad print; you looked out your word, turned over a number of pages known only to you and the receiver, counted down the page to the same line that your word was in, and substituted the word so found. The time required can be imagined from an example. A telegram came about the Oxford Light Infantry; the first word tracked to its lair was "Ox," then "Ford," then "Light," then "Infant," and then "Rye," each taking about three minutes to find! We got the telegrams off somehow, but it took nearly twenty-three hours to despatch them, with no rest and no food except bovril and such-like things brought to us occasionally. After the performance I lay down dead tired on a hard sofa in my sanctum, the waiting-room, and fell asleep at once. Immediately afterwards I was rudely awakened by a man with a blue envelope marked *Urgent* in red ink. Thinking I must have made a mess of the whole business, I opened it.

"SIR,—Two bags of lime were sent to your station on Tuesday last. The contractor has stated that he will charge as per margin [4d. in the margin] for the empty bags unless returned

immediately, etc., etc.—Signed, “X,” for “Y,” for “Z,” for General Officer Commanding Lines of Communication.”

The responsibility for my comments at the time must rest upon the signing official. I kept his production as a souvenir.

Line of communication defence work is always rather jumpy for raw troops, especially at night, as experience in the Soudan had taught me; but that was in the days before there were telephones from the outposts to headquarters, so fewer people were disturbed. We had an experience about that time of two messages coming in to a certain headquarters on the line; the first was: “Boers are advancing in force on No. 14 Picket.” A few minutes afterwards came this amendment: “Boers reported as advancing on No. 14 Picket are ostriches.” But soon there was real trouble on the line of communication; some Transvaal Boers worked their way into the north-west of Cape Colony, and a number of the Cape Dutch joined them. The situation was rather alarming because of the importance of the traffic along the line, upon which Lord Roberts’ force depended entirely, the direct line from Naawpoort to Bloemfontein being still in the hands of the enemy. There was a minor disaster, which prevented the first troops sent to put down a rising near Prieska from achieving their object, and we received orders (I had a new chief then) to organise a flying column out of troops which we pulled out of the train, violently protesting, at Victoria West. From that place we were to march to

Kenhardt, about two hundred and fifty miles, where the main body of the "enemy" was reported to be established.

After having learned much about line of communication work, that trek afforded a splendid chance of earning experience in marching. My work was that of Chief Staff Officer of the column, and it was a great relief to take to the saddle after much office work and perpetual railway travelling. All our troops were mounted; Imperial Yeomanry (the first lot, not the "five-bobs"), Canadian Mounted Riflemen, riding in heavy Mexican saddles, West Australian Mounted Infantry, New Zealand Mounted Infantry, and Canadian Field Artillery. I may add at once that we had no fighting, but we learned much about trekking and about horse-mastership, also about the value of discipline. Some of the treks between water were long ones of over thirty miles, and at one place we found that the wells had been poisoned; if the poisoners had been caught red-handed I should have been sorry for them, but they got away for the time. Amongst other experiences, we discovered how many things a horse can eat; often we had nothing for them but crushed wheat and Karoo bush. I was lucky enough to have a Basuto pony which thrived upon such diet, so I rode him most of the way. The big horses suffered most. Many of the men were very bad horse-masters, and sat in the saddle from morning to night, even during long halts; that fact, combined with the poor feeding, led to one of the mounted units having no less

than eighty per cent. of their horses with sore backs, and many with girth galls. We got to Kenhardt somehow, and on arrival received a wire from Lord Kitchener, partly in clear and partly in cipher. The clear part said: "I have occupied Prieska, and am advancing on Kenhardt." The cipher part said: "The last sentence will interest the enemy." I have often wondered whether the celebrated rumour about 100,000 Russians being on their way to France in the early months of the Great War derived its origin from the same source, and was started with a similar object!

I rode into Kenhardt with an escort some miles ahead of the column, and found the place abandoned by its population, excepting one old woman. All the stores had been left with their contents exposed, and, to my horror, the hotel was open, and all the liquor had been left unguarded. After our hot and dusty trek for thirty miles there were infinite possibilities in the situation, so I took the precaution of putting a guard on the liquor, with orders that no one was to go near it. About an hour afterwards, when some of the troops had come in, I thought I had better ride round and see how the guard was getting on. I found a long queue of about thirty men carrying bottles, pails, or anything that would hold liquid, waiting their turn to get to some casks of "Cape smoke," a particularly potent sort of rough brandy; the sentry was turning on the tap for them. That left no alternative but to set to work and get rid of the whole of the store of

liquor by turning on the taps, knocking the bungs out of the casks, and smashing all the bottles. A stream of reeking alcohol, of all colours and strengths, flowed away through dusty channels across the rocky ground into the nearest spruit.

Our chief work at Kenhardt was to investigate charges against British subjects who had taken up arms, the Transvaalers having all cleared off. In spite of the rising, martial law had not been proclaimed, so we were not very certain about our legal powers as affecting the civil population, even when taken with arms in open rebellion, but we tried to make up in majesty what we lacked in law. My chief sat in the magistrate's high rostrum with a canopy like a pulpit's, and I sat below him as his "clerk." The first prisoner brought in was the man suspected of having poisoned the well, and the first question shot at him over my head was: "Who told you to put the poison in the well?" The answer was: "X—— told me to put the poison in the well." The next question was: "What poison did you put in the well?" He explained; it was a vegetable poison, made from a bush of which the familiar Dutch name means "Gertrude-do-not-touch-me-or-I-stink." It was not a very legal form of procedure I fear, but we sent the man down to Cape Town, where no doubt he had a fair trial and no attention was paid to his own confession.

It was a great advantage on that trek to have representatives of all parts of the Empire, so that we could learn from each other. One of the principal lessons I learned myself was what to do

with hundreds of horses by night if you camped on solid rock, with no hope of picketing them to pegs. The artillery were all right, as they had their guns, limbers, and waggons to stretch ropes between, and the horses could be tied to the ropes, but the mounted riflemen were not so well off. After we had had one night stampede of horses we did not want to repeat the experience, so when bivouacking on rocky ground we tied the horses to each other by their headstalls in rings, about eight or ten horses in each ring, and dumped some forage for them in the middle. We had no more stampedes.

Another lesson I learned was to remember the length of my column, including the transport, making an allowance for straggling. We did a very long trek one night, and I halted the column for a short rest on a good level bit of road, forgetting that we had lately come down a steep hill. What happened was that the leading troops halted, and the turmoil at the tail rose to such a hubbub that I rode back to see what was the trouble. There was a block at the bottom of the hill, and behind it an appalling jumble of guns, waggons, mules, oxen, and lurid language which made of that "rest" a very bad fiasco.

The country we trekked through was very interesting, and very lonely. Most of it was a desert of rocks and low scrub, and nothing growing excepting after rain, of which we had a heavy fall one night. I shall never forget the next morning's marvel; what had been desert had changed, a chorus of little flowers of many colours

had burst out to greet the sun after the rainy night. We learned another lesson from that rain. Several of us thought that a hollow or a spruit was a good place to lie in, as we thought that it gave shelter from wind; first we learned that it was the draughtiest place you can find, and then, when we had succeeded in getting to sleep, we were washed out by flood water coming down from the hills. After that we followed the example of sheep and other animals, which always rest upon hummocks, the calmest spots, and not in hollows, which are the draughtiest.

Our work at Kenhardt being finished, we were sent back to the railway line to disperse, the various units being sent on to the Orange Free State and elsewhere.

On arrival at the railway again at Victoria West, I found a telegram from General Headquarters telling me to join the Seventh Division (General Tucker) of the field army as Provost Marshal, an appointment which I never took up. On arriving at Bloemfontein I found that the appointment had been changed to Intelligence Officer (D.A.A.G.) of the Eighth Division (General Rundle), then away to the eastward of the railway through the Free State. The main army at the time was held up at Bloemfontein for want of transport, de Wet having succeeded in capturing an immense convoy of waggons, following after our force on the march to Paardeberg, with all their contents. I had to wait at Bloemfontein for an opportunity to join the Eighth Division, and was given work in the Intelligence Office of Lord



Roberts' Headquarters. Sir William Robertson, then a Captain, was one of my contemporaries in that office; Sir F. Davies, lately Military Secretary at the War Office, and Sir William Furse, Master-General of the Ordnance, were others. It was about the time of the disaster at the waterworks, and much of the country to the eastward of the railway line was in the hands of the Boers; so was all the Free State more than ten miles north of Bloemfontein. An epidemic of enteric had broken out amongst the troops, and it was highly desirable to continue the advance, for which the necessary transport was being collected as fast as possible.

After a few days of that work an opportunity offered to get to the Eighth Division, then on its way to Thaban'chu, as an ox-convoy was leaving the railway at Edenburg to join them. In any event it was clear that Edenburg, their base, offered better chances than Bloemfontein. At one of the sidings-where our train stopped I had the good luck to find my horses trekking from De Aar with a convoy to Bloemfontein, so I got out of the train and rode to Edenburg, arriving there at night. The convoy left the next day. It was a slow and wearisome march, but we were obliged to stick to the convoy and its escort as the country was full of enemies waiting to cut off stragglers. The Colonial Division was held up at Wepener at the time, and the Eighth Division, which I was to join, had met with opposition near Reddesburg. When within a day's march of the Division, I rode on and caught the rear-guard,

just arriving at Thaban'chu. Sir John French's cavalry and Sir Ian Hamilton's Mounted Infantry were there, in addition to Sir Leslie Rundle's Eighth Division. There were plenty of celebrities in embryo in the little town of Thaban'chu in those days. Sir Douglas Haig was Sir John French's chief Staff Officer, and Sir H. Lawrence, Chief of the General Staff to Sir Douglas in the Great War, was Intelligence Officer.

My late chief at De Aar was commanding a Mounted Infantry Brigade, and through his influence I rode out with the mounted troops early the next morning to a very interesting skirmishing day. We located and engaged the enemy eastward of the town. In the afternoon I reported myself at the Eighth Division Headquarters, where I relieved Sir G. Milne (then a Captain), who commanded the British forces in Macedonia and the Near East in the Great War.

We had opposite to us nearly the whole of the Free State army and a certain number of Transvaalers. They were in big laagers on the other side of a ridge, about six miles off, called Eden Nek, and I soon had a good system established for getting news of their movements, but it was strenuous work. We had one indecisive fight before Sir John French left with the mounted troops to precede the main army in their advance to Pretoria; but it was decided not to undertake serious operations, which would use up time and transport required for the main advance. We had about 7,000 to 9,000 Boers against us, and I have a queer note in my Intelligence Diary that

“ a man called ” Christian De Wet had taken over the command. That was before he was famous. De Wet with 9,000 men was a much less formidable adversary than he was afterwards when he had 900, all picked men, and willing to obey orders, instead of first holding a sort of Soviet conference to “ make a plan,” about which everyone was entitled to speak, those who disagreed suffering no penalty for not joining loyally in its execution.

It was rather an interesting experience to have to take over the civil government of the town, there being no police or municipal services of any kind, every able-bodied man being in arms against us. I gathered that the Landrost must have been looked upon as a sort of father of the flock, to be leant upon by all, when at 1 a.m. on my second night performing his office I got a message from an old lady to say that she had no matches in her house, and what was she to do about it ? A local Englishman (a Free State burgher) living in the town taught me much about keeping my eyes open on active service. We were riding outside the town one morning when he asked me if I had noticed anything lately. I told him that, about a mile back, we had passed fifteen horses grazing on the veld. He said: “ Did you notice that one of them had much dried sweat and the mark of a saddle on it, which shows that a Boer spy rode it in the night and is in hiding in the town ? ” I had not.

After a few days the Boers trekked away to the north-east, and we trekked after them with

the Eighth Division, the Colonial Division, and a force of Imperial Yeomanry. When we got on the move the Intelligence work became very heavy indeed, as there were people to be interviewed most of the night after each day's march. Under the system I established we knew of every party of Boers within forty miles of us, but as we moved forward new means of getting information had constantly to be devised. The difficulty was, not in getting information, but in sifting the few true items from the masses of false reports. All the time we realised that the enemy knew more about us than we did about him, and he knew the country while we were dependent entirely upon guides, not always easy to obtain; our maps were quite useless, and very misleading; they seemed to be the result of hasty eye-sketches pieced together roughly, and on each map was an assortment of blank spaces labelled "Defective Compilation" in capitals. Once we had rather an amusing experience, as we camped in a place from which we could see two identified mountains. These enabled us to fix our position accurately, and we found that we were exactly where the letter D of defective was marked on our maps. So official despatches sent from that camp were dated from "The D of Defective Compilation."

That sort of humour is forgiven in official messages on active service. A certain friend of mine who rose to the command of an army on the Western Front in the Great War was a Colonel commanding one of the numerous columns in the later stages of the South African War. Every-

thing depended upon communication by signal between the columns, and he succeeded in obtaining approval for a special supply of heliographs for the purpose. Whenever his column approached the railway he asked for his helios. This went on for some weeks. At last, when he was getting desperate, he signalled to a depot he was approaching, "Have you got my helios?" "What do you want them for?" came back. The reply, "To fry kidneys on," nearly shook the official out of his chair.

Staff work in the British Army in 1900 was in its infancy. The practice in wars in Egypt had been to have a certain number of Staff Officers allotted to the Headquarters of each command, and for the different branches of Staff work to be done promiscuously by anyone who happened to be on the spot. It worked all right with a small army, but in South Africa things were on too large a scale. One duty—intelligence about the enemy—fell naturally upon the Intelligence Officer; so did much other work. Upon me, as D.A.A.G. (I), fell Press censorship, civil government of towns occupied, requisitioning policy, charge of prisoners, and all such-like work, in addition to providing guides for all marching columns, native messengers to carry despatches where our wires were cut, and the enlistment, maintenance, and payment of all native scouts. Having no staff excepting one interpreter, I found that my day's work averaged about seventeen or eighteen hours, and when we got down to quarter rations, owing to the system of trying to feed us from a distant

railway instead of from the local resources, the work and exposure began to tell upon me after about three months lying out in the open in all weathers. After one or two temporary collapses I had a final one, following a ducking in a river crossed on the march, and a night lying out in wet things, or, rather, stamping about trying to stop the pain of frozen feet. But before my final breakdown, which occurred at Ficksburg on the Basutoland border, we had some excitements which are worth recording.

We heard of the occupation of Pretoria soon after Queen Victoria's birthday, on which night the cheers for Her Majesty went roaring up from our bivouac under the bright stars of a South African night. A few days afterwards I had a trip with a small escort ahead of the Division to Senekal, to find out about the situation there, and ascertain whether the water-supply would suffice for our animals. That was a very exciting day. First the town was officially surrendered. Then the people came and delivered up their arms to me in an open place in the suburbs. Then, when the pile of arms was complete, we found that a commando of Boers had come back and surrounded us. We had to hold out for nearly four hours, outnumbered by about ten to one, under a pretty hot fire. My interpreter managed to get out early in the proceedings with a message from me to the General, who brought the Division on, and then the Boers cleared off. The most exciting operation was destroying the arms in the open before getting under cover. A sergeant in the

Middlesex Yeomanry did splendid work there, but unluckily I did not note his name.

A night or two after we had settled down at Senekal a message arrived from some Yeomanry (Colonel Spragge's) at Lindley, about sixty miles away, to say they were surrounded and could only hold out until the following day. It was decided to attack the nearest Boer force which was in laager at Biddulphsberg, and we fought the battle of that name on May 29th. I will not repeat the accounts which have appeared in the war history, but one or two impressions of the day stand out. It was a very spectacular battle. Just after dawn a tremendous veld fire was started, probably by someone in the mounted troops leading the advance throwing away a smouldering match into the dry grass. Before long the fire flickered past us and we were showing up as clear khaki-clad targets on a black ground. Huge columns of purple smoke were drifting across the front from the burning grass, and here and there were patches of raging red and orange flames where the dry mealie-stalks had caught fire.

We narrowly escaped an ambush that morning. The Boers had laid a trap for us between the hills skirting the Bethlehem road, but one of my best scouts had been within a few yards of them during the night listening to their complaints about not being allowed to smoke, and he brought the news just in time for us to change the route. One of their guns had a "sitter" target at the General and Staff sitting on their horses in the open at a range of about 3,000 yards, but the Boer fuses

were bad and inaccurate. The gun seemed to be firing from behind the wall of a small kraal, and went on persistently for several hours, in spite of the attentions of ten of our field guns. I did not understand the mystery until twelve years afterwards, when I stayed with a Dutch farmer who had been in the battle, and owned the farm close to the kraal. He showed me the spot; the gun was behind the second wall of the kraal, the front wall had been plastered with shrapnel bullets, which I found lying thick on the ground even after the lapse of twelve years. The farmer also explained the reason for our heavy losses from rifle fire. Eighteen Boers were lying unobserved in hollows in the grass within eighty to a hundred yards of our firing-line, picking our men off as they came over the sky-line. I lay in one of the little hollows in the ground and judged the range as given. Sir Francis Lloyd, late in command in London, was one of the badly wounded at that spot; he was then in command of the second battalion of the Grenadier Guards. Major Webber, one of General Rundle's A.D.C.'s, was also wounded when carrying a message there; the point was so far from the main position we were attacking that he was still riding when he was hit.

The day after the battle a brigade under General Clements relieved us at Senekal, and we were given the task of holding the line extending to the Basutoland border at Ficksburg against the whole Free State army assembled in the Brand-water basin. I gradually got feebler during that



time, but carried on the work till the General insisted on my going into Ficksburg for a rest. A trip from there with a small column towards Ladybrand, and the river ducking mentioned above, finished me off, and a Medical Board sentenced me to England, where I arrived some time in August, still somewhat collapsed, but grateful for having had eight months of such varied experience of Staff work under South African conditions, both at the front and on the lines of communication. The old lesson, to "eat, drink, and sleep whenever you get an opportunity" on service was remembered; but, really, looking back at the work, I could not recall any lost opportunities, either for food or for sleep—the point was that opportunities did not occur!

From Lord Roberts' despatch, dated the following November, I found that I had been "mentioned," and in the War Office Gazette I was promoted to Lieutenant-Colonel in the Army by brevet. Had I been in any service but my own this would have meant much, but brevet rank is of no value to a Marine, as will subsequently be explained. Not long afterwards the Admiralty Gazette announced that I had been made a Companion of the Bath, an honour which in those days could in theory be conferred only for service as a field officer in action. Compared with hundreds of my contemporaries in the Army, whose physical fitness enabled them to hold out for so many more months of service, I could not help feeling that I had been overloaded with rewards.

## CHAPTER X

### THE ADMIRALTY AND THE HOME FLEET, 1901-4

*Doth the paintwork make war with the funnels ?  
Do the decks to the cannon complain ?  
Nay, they know that some soap or a scraper,  
Unites them as brothers again.*

(Law of the Navy.)

Six months' complete rest was the verdict of the Army Medical Boards. At that time the general idea was that the South African War was practically over, so rest was easier than in the Great War, when it was impossible for any self-respecting male as long as brain or body were fit for use. Before six months had passed an offer came of a temporary appointment at the Admiralty, or, rather at the Royal Marine Office, the Headquarters of the R.M. Forces, to act for a man<sup>1</sup> who was going round the world in the *Ophir* as Equerry to King George, then Duke of York. The appointment was that of Deputy-Assistant-Adjutant-General (the importance of a military appointment varies inversely with the number of words taken to describe it; above me was an Assistant-Adjutant-General, and above him a Deputy Adjutant-General, now called "Adjutant-General," the only appointment under the Admiralty open to Marine Generals). In those times officers in the Marines were divided roughly into two classes, those who went to sea or abroad,

<sup>1</sup> The late Major-General J. H. Bor, C.B., C.M.G.

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and those who did not. There was no minimum of service at sea in each rank to qualify for promotion to the next as there was in the Navy, and it was not unusual for an officer to spend practically all his service at his R.M. Headquarters at one of the naval ports in various regimental staff appointments, varying his service perhaps by obtaining an adjutancy of Militia or Volunteers. The two senior officers I found in the Marine office were of the home service class. Out of their combined total service of about seventy years, only about three or thereabouts had been spent in sea-going ships. They had the routine work of Marine administration at their fingers' ends, but the bulk of the work fell upon clerks skilled in the voluminous regulations bearing upon such matters. There was little or no correspondence on training or preparation for war, and no mental interest or scope for initiative. Under such conditions the office work worked very smoothly, like good machinery requiring nothing but an occasional drop of oil; every letter received was answered the same day. It was all very peaceful for those engaged in working the machine, and in the summer-time there were very pleasant inspection trips, of which long notice was given. The same programme was always followed, resembling that of the Army of earlier days. A formal reception in "marching" order, in which it would have been difficult, if not impossible, to march; a test in ceremonial drill; an inspection of barracks, of kits, and of books; and a dinner in the officers' mess. Military training, as under-

stood in the Army, was not tested in any way; no such training was carried out in the Corps by any force larger than a company, and very rarely even by such a body on account of the constant demands for men for the Fleet.

In my own branch of the work, equipment, an opportunity offered at last of introducing one long overdue reform, the abolition of the old sticky black "valise," upon the polishing of which hundreds of thousands of hours were wasted by the men. In South Africa, as in former wars, it had not been carried on active service. The existing ones were used up as small kit-bags, sorely needed by Marines when serving on shore, as they had nothing but their enormous sea kit-bags containing all their possessions, and far too large for the purpose. The unsuitable black cover for the canteen also went, unregretted. About £1,000 a year for repair of these useless articles alone, without counting their replacement, was thus saved to the public by a stroke of the pen. The maze of heavy buff leather pipeclayed straps remained. They never could be worn out, and endured for many years afterwards in the Marine service. There was an immense stock to be got rid of.

But these questions were of minor interest. One morning an opportunity offered to work a radical change in the position of Marine officers at sea. They were still left idle in the wardroom while the whole of their men were employed on deck, although masts and yards had disappeared from our capital ships for about fifteen years.

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They were quite capable, with a little practice, of undertaking all the duties of naval officers in big ships, with the sole exception of officer of the watch at sea. I drafted a proposal for their employment, and my chief consented to put it forward after consulting the First Sea Lord, Lord Walter Kerr, and at his suggestion amending the wording to exclude a paragraph about wardroom sofas, which was put too frivolously for such an historic document. The paper went on to the Second Sea Lord, and was not heard of again until resuscitated by Lord Fisher, as will appear later. The ultimate result was that the Marine officer at sea, instead of being idle, discontented, and deteriorating daily for want of work, has become, I am told, one of the hardest worked and therefore respected men in a ship's complement, until he reaches the higher ranks, when it is impossible to find work suited to his seniority.

That was the outstanding result of the year's work at the Marine Office, and it stands out accordingly in remembrance. I had the good luck, however, to be given work of much scope in the Admiralty itself. It was no less a matter than the joint secretaryship of a Committee with terms of reference which covered the whole scheme for manning the Fleet in peace and in war. It was presided over by Sir Edward Grey,<sup>1</sup> then one of the leading statesmen in opposition, and was called the Naval Reserves Committee. The members were: on the civil side, Sir Francis Mowatt, of the Treasury; Sir Alfred Jones, representing

<sup>1</sup> Viscount Grey of Fallodon,

the Mercantile Marine; and Mr. Clarke Hall, the Registrar-General for Merchant Seamen; on the Naval side, Admirals Sir Edward Seymour, Sir Reginald Henderson, and Sir Hedworth Meux (then a Commodore). Mr. C. E. Gifford, who had done yeoman service in establishing the Royal Fleet Reserve, was my joint secretary. Lord Selborne was First Lord at the time, and the Committee was appointed at his instigation to satisfy the House of Commons that the Fleet would be manned on as economical principles as it could be, consistently with efficiency. I have never known a subject studied more thoroughly by a Committee, or sounder conclusions than those arrived at under the guidance of Sir Edward Grey, who was one of the first statesmen of front rank I had had the good luck to know intimately. By knowing him I was cured once for all of the popular practice of lumping together all men charged with public affairs under the label of "politicians," used as a term of opprobrium.

The terms of reference, though covering the whole problem of manning the Fleet, cautioned us that we were on no account to interfere with the continuous service (long service) system time-honoured in the Navy. The question of building up a reserve rapidly, especially of stokers, was urgent. The only way such a reserve could possibly be built up was by training them for a few years in the Fleet. This was irreconcilable with our terms of reference, so we drove a coach-and-four through them by proposing short service (followed by compulsory service in the reserve),

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running concurrently with long service for other seamen and for stokers, men of both classes to be included in the complement of each ship. That was accepted without demur.

Then we found from the figures we were given that the number of active service men voted by Parliament barely sufficed to provide the minimum proportion required to man the Fleet to be placed in commission at the outbreak of war. No provision at all had been made for expansion, or for the unforeseen. An assumption had apparently been made that the "wastage of ships would exceed the wastage of men," that there would be no subsidiary demands for naval personnel, and that new ships could be manned by the crews saved from sunken ships. Knowing the value of catch-words and phrases in public affairs, we applied the adjective "initial" to all statistics given to us about personnel required to man the "War Fleet," which then read "Initial War Fleet." In the light of the experience gained twelve years afterwards in the Great War, it is worth while to quote the reasons we gave (in 1902) for supplying naval personnel over and above the minimum required to man the war vessels actually completed on the outbreak of war. Officers and men, we considered, would afterwards be required to replace casualties, to provide relief crews for destroyers and other vessels involving exceptional strain upon their crews, and to provide personnel for the expansion of the Fleet by "improvising additional armed vessels, and auxiliaries from the merchant fleet, purchase of foreign ships—as, for

instance, those building in private yards in this country—building additional ships, and completing those being built at the time of mobilisation.” We pressed strongly for a modest fifty per cent. of trained naval personnel for these requirements over and above the numbers for the “initial” war fleet and harbour establishments, and we urged that a due proportion of that fifty per cent. should be active service ratings. Even that modest estimate of extra requirements caused some horror in financial circles of the day.

Another recommendation was to establish a special “immediate” class of Royal Fleet Reservists and to embark them in the Fleet in “peace manœuvres and on other occasions when ships are temporarily commissioned.” The effect of the presence of these men in the Fleet during the naval manœuvres in 1914 is now a matter of history. By keeping them in the ships when clouds rose on the European horizon at the end of July, 1914, we were able to concentrate our forces earlier than if we had had to await naval mobilisation proper, which did not begin until the 2nd of August.

Then there was the establishment of the R.N.V.R., which numbered nearly 52,000 at the end of the Great War. There had been various bodies of naval volunteers in this country, from the naval fencibles of old to the Royal Naval Artillery volunteers, which had recently been abolished. All such organisations had failed because the area of their employment was limited. The witnesses before the Committee nearly all



pressed for a new body of naval volunteers to serve under similar conditions. Sir Charles Chadwyck Healey, formerly a naval artillery volunteer, did splendid service in the matter, and ensured the success of the new movement by accepting the conditions, explained in a paragraph of our report, which led directly to the establishment of the present R.N.V.R. They have since earned the gratitude of the whole nation for their work in the Great War. This was the paragraph: "The area of employment of former naval volunteer organisations was limited, . . . there should be no such restrictions for service with the new corps, because the conditions of naval strategy render it impossible to limit the area of employment of His Majesty's ships." That was unanswerable, but we were told that volunteers would not accept such conditions. The prediction was not fulfilled.

I feel that I have failed to convey a proper impression of the difficulty in obtaining sufficient funds to provide enough officers and men to man the ships (which "appeal to the public imagination," as Lord Jellicoe has put it) voted by Parliament. Some of our recommendations required Parliamentary sanction, and the one about the R.N.V.R. required legislation. The programme of bills being dealt with in the House of Commons at the time was so overloaded that it seemed hopeless to get through an Act of such far-reaching effect, but this difficulty was overcome by "legislation by cross reference." A very short Bill was drafted, referring to many

others, whereby the Admiralty was given the power (without the fact being conspicuously apparent) to send naval volunteers all over the world! The Bill became an Act without discussion.

Our committee was appointed in January, 1902, and reported in January, 1903, after a year of strenuous labour over details which were well worth mastering. The Treasury accepted our recommendations, which were all carried out with one exception, the establishment of a Royal Marine volunteer reserve similar to the R.N.V.R. Perhaps some day this also will materialise; it would form a splendid corps, and some such body would have been invaluable in the Great War. The result of the want was that the Admiralty force sent by Mr. Churchill in 1914 to take part in land operations contained a very large proportion of R.N.V.R., neither trained nor equipped for land service, and anxious to serve at sea, where they were soon sorely needed.

I find that I have omitted one important feature of the work of Sir Edward Grey's "Naval Reserves" Committee. Just before the Imperial Conference of 1902 we put in a report advocating a policy for men, rather than money, to be provided by the Dominions as their contribution to the Navy. Knowledge of naval matters and the conditions of naval strategy was crude, to say the least of it, in the great self-governing Dominions in those days; and we thought that sound views could best be introduced by getting officers and men from the Dominions to serve in the

British Fleet; after doing so, they would be likely to give sound advice to their statesmen, and the result would be worth waiting for. It would have far-reaching effects when the population in the Dominions increased to numbers exceeding the population of the United Kingdom.

Before I left the Admiralty Lord Fisher took me partly into his confidence about the reforms he was introducing as affecting the Royal Marines, and I did a good deal of work for him. I was wholeheartedly with him about common entry, Marine officers to go through the *Britannia*, etc., as I had been unable to obtain my way in 1899 about their going to sea before joining at Greenwich. I put in provisos that they must join the Marines permanently at the age of eighteen, and that the Marine service must be made sufficiently attractive to draw a suitable class of candidate from amongst a number of boys who had the option of joining the naval service, with all its opportunities of a career. In spite of Lord Fisher's assurances I had some doubt about this, and pointed out that there was still the problem of the existing Marine officer to be dealt with, and the most important point was to give the junior officer work at sea with some mental interest and responsibility. Unless this was done I pointed out that they would deteriorate steadily from sheer idleness, and be unemployable in the senior ranks in any work involving responsibility to which they were unaccustomed. Knowing Lord Fisher's delight in catchwords, I gave him one: "It is said that Marine officers are 'useless'

on board ship—it would be more accurate to say ‘not used’!” The phrase was immediately adopted. Then I told him of the paper sent in to the Second Sea Lord over a year before by the Deputy Adjutant-General of Marines. He told me to get it. This I succeeded with much trouble in doing. It had been put away by Sir Archibald Douglas, who had left the Admiralty, and had never sent it on for action. Lord Fisher said, “Why, this is just the thing,” sent for the new Deputy Adjutant-General, told him to put it on as a new paper, and the result was a circular from the Admiralty to the Fleet, dated Christmas Eve, 1902, to say that employment was to be devised by all Captains for their Marine officers. A copy of that circular, with the original pencil draft, dated nearly two years earlier, is amongst my most treasured possessions. I hear constantly of the changes it has wrought in the status of the Marine officer at sea since my own early days, when, from the Service point of view, he was looked upon as unemployable, and left to deteriorate in sheer idleness.

It was a great delight to serve Lord Fisher if you agreed with him. He was like a sort of steam-roller, and anything you wanted to get forward you could hang on behind with the certainty that it would progress. If you disagreed with him it was another matter. You could neither steer nor put the brake on the steam-roller if you thought it was moving at a disastrous direction—as, in my own case, will appear in a later “memory.”

While at the Admiralty I had been asked by Admiral Fawkes to go out to the Mediterranean with him in the *Canopus*, but the Naval Reserves Committee work was too important to abandon.

When the Admiralty work was over I joined the R.M.A. Headquarters at Eastney again, and picked up at the batteries there the latest points about naval gunnery, a very necessary procedure on my part before going to sea again, as many changes had been brought in since I had last served afloat. In March my turn came to go, and I joined Admiral Noel's Flagship, the *Revenge*, in Portland Harbour in March, 1903.

I have mentioned that when a Marine officer goes to sea for the second time he finds his contemporaries in the Navy have all passed over his head in the Service, and he must resign himself to these conditions, but he still finds many of them still serving in the wardroom messes. A senior Marine officer going for the third time finds that they have become Captains of their own ships, possibly Rear-Admirals, and no longer to be met with in wardrooms. He also finds that there is no increase in his own responsibilities, in my own case a decrease, since I had been the first Fleet Intelligence officer up the Straits.

I began with a splendidly humbling experience in the *Revenge*, which made it quite clear that the functions of a Lieutenant-Colonel in one of His Majesty's ships differ materially from what they are on land. It was a horrible morning, blowing half a gale, with driving sleet and a nasty short sea which made even big ships kick a good deal.



THE PARADE GROUND, EASTNEY BARRACKS, PORTSMOUTH: PRESENTATION OF SOUTH AFRICAN WAR MEDALS  
BY THE COMMANDANT.

*Facing page 224.*



Just before dawn a loud knock came at the panel of my cabin, where I was warmly tucked in watching the spray being whisked by the wind off the tips of the waves, and driving against the glass of my scuttle. “Captain wants to see you on the bridge at once!”

Hastily disguising my pyjamas in a veneer of uniform, and pulling on a cap, I struggled on to the fore-bridge, ready to do what little I could to save the Fleet from disaster, and was met with the surprising announcement by the Captain: “I say, Colonel, my orderly can’t find my mackintosh!” Saved by the greatest blessing in life, an early morning sense of humour, I laughed at the remark, said, “Is that all, sir?” and hastened back to a still warm bed.

We had several interesting experiences in the *Revenge* and the *Exmouth*, her successor as Flagship of the Home Fleet. Sir Gerard Noel’s time was nearly up when I joined the Fleet, and he was succeeded by Sir A. K. Wilson, whom I had known well “up the Straits” when I was last at sea. We had some delightful cruises, and took part in very interesting manœuvres. Sir E. E. Bradford, who commanded a Battle Squadron in the Great War, came with Admiral Wilson as Flag-Captain. We spent as much time as possible at sea in all weathers, and had few opportunities for leave. During my fifteen months in the Home Fleet we visited nearly every harbour in the United Kingdom that would hold us, and we had a most interesting time on the coasts of Spain and Portugal.



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I will try to recall some of the work and play, taking the work first. The naval manœuvres were of special interest. We started from Berehaven as a "B" Fleet to fight against a fleet from the Mediterranean called the "X" Fleet, under Sir Compton Domvile. His fleet was more concentrated, and our object was to effect a junction between certain different squadrons, starting from different places, before he could deal with them in detail. The junction was effected successfully, well out in the Atlantic, somewhere off the Azores, though our main squadron was spread out over many miles of sea by a voyage at  $12\frac{3}{4}$  knots out to the rendezvous. Owing to minor breakdowns, seldom more than two ships were in sight of the Flagship by the second day of the voyage. It was a good test of continuous steaming. After the manœuvres we were all to assemble in Lagos Bay, and that assembly was an experience that I should have been sorry to have missed. On the morning on which the fleets were to meet there was a dense fog, but we kept in touch by wireless. The first that the uninitiated in "B" Fleet knew of the approach of the "X" Fleet was the smell of the *Mars*, which, with one other ship, had been fitted experimentally to burn oil fuel. We flogged on through the fog, which suddenly lifted like a curtain, and we all steamed together in formation for anchoring in the wide bay. There were about seventy heavy ships. The roar of their cables as the anchors were let go could be heard for miles inland, and the sound of the twenty-one

gun salute was something to remember. The King of Portugal was present in his yacht to witness the arrival. The gatherings of old friends who had not met for years were worth attending. The wardroom of the "X" Fleet flagship gave us a dinner, and we had a very convivial evening, in spite of the fact that keenness about the manœuvres ran so high that the dessert was cleared off the dinner-table to make way for charts on which to argue who had won or lost. We had a great gathering on board the *Revenge*, and the catering and organising for it fell upon me.

We did not want any more talk about who had won or lost, but to devote all our time to yarning with old friends, so we painted an enormous scroll, spread all round the Quarter-deck awning curtain, with a "Law of the Navy" adapted<sup>1</sup> to the occasion:

"Doth the 'X' Fleet make war with the 'B' Fleet?  
Do they both to the Umpires complain?  
Nay—they know that a whisky-and-soda  
Unites them as brothers again."

That started on the right lines the crowd of about six hundred officers who came on board. My special task was to serve out the whiskys-and-sodas, and my output from the bar was 1,553 in under two hours, all well iced. We had five big tubs of ice, obtained from Gib, and the bottles of soda were put in No. 1 tub and moved on by specially trained men to No. 5, from which they were drawn, uncorked, put upright in trays with holes to fit them, and carried round to follow

<sup>1</sup> See page 213.

similar trays with empty tumblers and tiny decanters of whisky; sandwiches and "snacks" on long tables completed the organisation. We knew better than to have a regular entertainment requiring silence in the audience, so we had a massed band concert, and the hubbub of talk drowned the massed bands' most violent efforts. We ended with a dance. It was a great gathering; all ranks, from Flag officers (of whom we had seven or eight on board) to midshipmen, took the floor in the Lancers, and I remember especially the efficiency in waltzing of Commander Bingham, then a watch-keeper in the Mediterranean Flagship, who years afterwards earned undying fame for his gallant leading, in the *Nestor*, of a destroyer attack at Jutland, for which he was awarded the Victoria Cross.

Another experience was a big review in Phoenix Park, Dublin. The Admiral sent me over to Ireland to make arrangements for the Naval Brigade and battalions of Marines to attend. The occasion was a visit by King Edward and Queen Alexandra. The Duke of Connaught was in command of the troops in Ireland at the time, and his chief staff officer was Sir John Maxwell, with whom I stayed. The arrangements all worked satisfactorily; we had about 3,000 blue-jackets, under the command of Sir George Warrender, and about 1,400 R.M.A. and R.M.L.I., under my own command. Following the privilege of the Navy on such occasions we were on the right of the line; next to us was a brigade of Guards, and, whether from nervousness or ignor-

ance, I managed to put my foot in it rather badly by giving the wrong order before that critical audience. Until a few weeks beforehand we had always "shouldered" arms at a ceremonial parade, but a new drill-book had recently come out, prescribing that troops were to "slope," instead of shouldering, before presenting arms. The Navy on my right "shouldered," as the new book had not been adopted by them, and I roared out the order "Shoulder-r-r- Arms!" to the Marines. With one accord every man "sloped" his rifle, moving like clockwork, as if I had given the right order instead of the wrong one. I had never seen quite such an example of the reliability of a long service force!

There was a story told about me, as a sequel to that Phoenix Park Review, which tested severely my reputation for sobriety, fortunately well established. It was a very hot and tiring day, and on the way back to Dublin I fell asleep, in full dress uniform, glittering with gold-lace and decorations, on an Irish car. My head naturally inclined over, and my helmet tilted to one side as I slumbered. Some of my messmates in the Flagship passed by in another car while I was so reposing, and their Jarvey pointed at me with the butt-end of his whip, and said, "See him? He's had a shpot!" I was greeted on my return to the ship with the question, "Who's had a spot?" and then elicited the tale.

My other work in Ireland during that cruise was to keep the streets of Kingstown and of Cork for King Edward and Queen Alexandra's proces-

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sion through those places. I had never had any of that sort of work to do before, and found that there is a good deal more in it than meets the eye. There were dense crowds of all grades, in and out of society, and there were some exciting moments. The chief feature was the spirit of personal loyalty and welcome running through all the demonstrations.

To return to Fleet work, a great advance had been made in naval gunnery since I had last been at sea, and "battle practice" had been introduced, but the ranges were very short indeed, judged by present standards. We did our battle practice in the *Revenge* at ranges between 3,000 and 5,000 yards, the ship being manœuvred according to a scheme set by umpires who watched the practice, instead of running a straight course past the target and firing at much shorter ranges, each ship judging the results for herself. For the battle practice I went back to my old place as spotting officer in the upper top, somewhat harassed by the climb to that dizzy height at my more advanced age. We did very well in spite of rather a serious contretemps. We were sorely handicapped for want of some reliable means of communication between the upper top and the guns; our scheme was to rig up a large canvas dial on which the ranges were marked, and indicated by a long pointer. A signal-boy on deck read them off, and passed them to the guns. We had done splendidly up to the time when the last group fired, and it was the best group of the lot, so we hoped to head the whole Fleet. To

my horror all their rounds dropped in the same hole in the water—300 *yards short*! We found afterwards that the disc had wobbled in the wind, the pointer had been bent outwards, and had registered 300 yards wrong when read from the deck.

On our way back from the Scilly Islands to Portland on one occasion we had an interesting, and to me quite new, experience. While shaving in my cabin I felt a sort of crunching jerk, which seemed rather peculiar. We were passing through a deep channel between two of the last of the islands. I thought a walk on deck was the best solution of the situation, and there I found the Admiral's secretary,<sup>1</sup> to whom the same idea had occurred. At breakfast in the wardroom no one said anything for a time, but someone at last remarked: "Did anyone feel anything queer a little time ago?" When the officer of the watch came down he told us that the first thing he noticed was that most of the ship's company seemed to prefer walking about on the fore-castle to going below. We were making a little water in the fore compartments, and it appeared on examination that we had struck a rock; when we went into dock at Portsmouth there was a hole fourteen feet long in the outer skin of the ship, but not through the double bottom. The Fleet was in line ahead, and all the ships might have had the same experience, but only one hit the same rock, apparently without knowing it. During the afternoon the *Royal Oak* signalled that her bread-room was full of water, and asked permission to put into Plymouth. I was talking over

<sup>1</sup> Paymaster-Captain G. H. A. Willis, C.B.

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the incident afterwards with the Hydrographer at the Admiralty, Sir William Wharton, and he told me that a special survey had afterwards been made, and a pinnacle rock had been found on a patch marked fifteen fathoms on the chart. Considering the traffic that must have passed through that channel, it was a wonder that we should have been the first to find that pinnacle, and without more serious disaster to the Fleet.

When at Portsmouth at Christmas-time of 1903 I was asked to dinner by Lord Fisher, then Commander-in-Chief there. I found the celebrated "Triumvirate" to whom we owe so much for the reorganisation of the War Office, and for general improvements in our Government machinery for the conduct of war: Lord Esher, Lord Sydenham (then Sir George Clarke), and Lord Fisher himself. Soon afterwards I heard from Lord Fisher that the reason why I had been asked to dine was to be "vetted," with a view to my being appointed as one of the assistant secretaries to the Committee of Imperial Defence, then being established, and he added that I had been selected for the appointment. I think that, from the professional point of view, that was the best moment of my life. A Marine, as I think I have shown, has no prospects whatever in the Naval Service when he gets beyond a certain rank, because, with the best intentions in the world, the Admiralty have no suitable responsible work to give him. Having passed the Staff College and held Army Staff appointments on active service, as well as Naval Staff appoint-

ments at the Admiralty and at sea, I delighted in the prospect, and thought that the proposed work might develop tremendously in importance and scope (as it has). I heard no more for about six months, and then received a letter from Lord Fisher breaking the news that the Treasury had disallowed one of the assistant secretaryships, and that I was not to have the promised appointment.

During my time in the Home Fleet we had an experience which marks a date in history, the first manœuvres by submarines against battleships. The conditions of the scheme were all in favour of the submarines, we were to leave Portland on a day known to the "enemy," and the battleships were to carry out operations which involved manœuvring in the neighbourhood of Portsmouth, supposed to be an enemy defended harbour, the last place to which battleships seemed inclined to resort under modern conditions of warfare. Sir Arthur Wilson handled the Fleet with his usual skill and vigour, and took the heavy ships into the very shallow water about the Owers Lightship and the Princessa Shoals. My work was to act as umpire in the Flagship, and I must say that the feeling when watching for periscopes from a big ship's deck was creepy, even in time of peace. The battleships were preceded by two lines of destroyers, but, nevertheless, a submarine suddenly appeared close to the *Royal Oak*, which ship would undoubtedly have been torpedoed.

We only had a few submarines of the original "A" class in those days. They were hardly out of the experimental stage, and care had to be



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taken not to put them to too great risk. The destroyers' Captains were very keen on their hunt, and wanted to tow hawsers between them to catch the periscopes that they saw, but this had to be stopped. On one day of the manœuvres a regular forest of periscopes appeared; these, when grappled by the destroyers, proved to be dummies, each ballasted with a shot to keep it upright. Such a ruse should be effective in keeping a squadron of battleships away from any channel. It would be impossible to distinguish between the false and the true danger.

Submarine A 1 was lost in those manœuvres. I do not think that any of us are likely to forget the feeling of helplessness of those on the surface, knowing that there were men alive in her, and powerless to help them, although every effort was made to raise her in time to save their lives. During the operations we saw the track of one submarine cross our course close under our stern. The Marine sentry on the poop, unused to such a sight, thought that he must do something, and let go the lifebuoy provided for his use when anyone fell overboard.

I must here interpose a story of the effect of orders upon unintelligent minds, trained to obey such orders in the letter without considering the spirit: One day our ship's chronometers ran down. It is the business of the Navigating Officer's department to wind them up, but, owing, doubtless, to the historic reliability of the Royal Marines, there was an order that the Sergeant of the Guard was to report "Chronometers wound

up" to the Captain on Saturday mornings. This he had done on the Saturday before the chronometers stopped. When brought up before the Captain he explained respectfully but indignantly that he *had* reported in accordance with his orders. It did not occur to him that the words had any meaning.

One way and another I found a certain amount to do, chiefly by making work. As Senior Marine Officer of the Fleet it was my business to inspect all the detachments in the various ships, and to test their military training (on a ship's deck). Once or twice we landed on the coast of Scotland or Ireland for a field day, thus getting the men into the country and away from the parade grounds on which they were accustomed to do their training. Such days did both officers and men much good. The officers who went to sea suffered rather severely as compared with those who did not, because of the difficulty in getting any instruction to help them to pass their promotion examinations, so we started classes of instruction, which they said helped them materially.

I think I have mentioned the chief points about work in the Home Fleet from a Marine officer's point of view in those days. I should like to add a few words about ship-visitors, who form such a feature of trips round the coast to show the White Ensign to the nation. These visitors come in vast crowds; while they are on board the ship's routine must be more or less at a standstill. Everything possible is done to make them welcome; they are conducted round in parties, and shown all the wonders of a man-of-war. Some

break away from their parties and investigate matters for themselves. I have often had the curtain of my cabin drawn suddenly, and seen half a dozen people outside, contemplating with interest the details of my toilet. Such incidents are natural, and taken in good part, and, as a rule, the sightseers behave as visitors and not as possessors, like the little boy who would not move away from the Lifeguardsman on sentry at the Horseguards, on the plea, "I may look at yer, can't I? I pays for yer." A ship being a home, and a centre of strenuous activity for the inhabitants, it is necessary to limit the public visitors to certain hours; only the Bolsheviks of Russia favour the invasion of private dwellings at all times of day and night. Amongst many thousands of ship-visitors I have only known one who resented eviction at the prescribed hour. His tourist steamer was waiting alongside for him, but he refused to leave on a similar plea to the little boy's: "I paid for the Fleet, and I shall stay as long as I like." The Quartermaster at the gangway rose to the occasion rather well; picking up a little bit of spunyarn, he presented it solemnly to the man, saying, "There's what you paid for; you can take it with you," and put him gently but firmly over the side.

The hospitality offered to us around the whole of the United Kingdom was phenomenal, especially on the west coast of Scotland, where we had grand times, stalking, shooting, and fishing galore, for those whose duties allowed them enough leisure to accept invitations. We could anchor close to the shore, as natural harbours abound on

that side, unlike the east coast, where they are few and far between.

One of the main differences between sea service in home waters and service on a foreign station is the difficulty of ensuring whole-hearted devotion to the ship as a home; when real home interests are so near this must be the case in peace time. Then, again, boat work in many of the exposed anchorages that we frequented in the Home Fleet entailed much discomfort, so ship-visiting was not practised to the extent that it was under easier conditions on the Mediterranean and other foreign stations. As a result it was difficult, under peace conditions, to keep the Fleet sentiment up to quite the pitch that it reaches on distant naval stations. Now that the stimulus of war, which inspired the Grand Fleet through the long vigil in the northern mists, has been withdrawn and the White Ensign is again appearing in all the seas, I expect that "all ranks and ratings" will welcome the chance of naval service under the conditions that prevailed when first I went to sea in the early eighties.

My experiences in the Home Fleet were brought to a close in the autumn of 1904. Sir Henry Rawlinson, whom I had met many years before at Malta, had become Commandant of the Staff College at Camberley, and he wrote to ask me to join the Directing Staff there as a teacher. He was anxious to bring the Army and Navy more in sympathy with each other by learning something of each other's work, and as I had held Staff appointments in both Services he thought that I could help in this policy. It was

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a big and appealing idea, which opened up all sorts of possibilities. If it succeeded we might even hope to break down the silly misunderstandings and jealousies between Army and Navy which stain the pages of the history of British wars. My idea was that the matter would settle itself at once if only the Army could learn more about the work of the Navy, and *vice versa*. It is encouraging to find this view confirmed in Sir Douglas Haig's final despatch from the Western Front: "An intelligent understanding of 'the other man's job' is the first essential of successful co-operation." That despatch referred to different branches of the land forces, but the same applies even more strongly to the wider case of land and sea. Needless to say that I jumped at the offer. The Lords of the Admiralty approved, and I joined the Staff College in August, 1904; my delightful experiences there must form the subject of another chapter. My messmates in the *Exmouth*, to which ship Sir Arthur Wilson had transferred his flag from the *Revenge*, gave me a nice send-off, and I left them with regret, and with some trepidation at the prospect of posing before a strange and critical audience as Professor of so wide and unexplored a subject as "Imperial Strategy." I understood that to mean the co-ordination of all our resources by sea and land (we did not fly in those days), fighting forces, economic and financial resources, and all means of communication, to save the Empire in the next great war. I felt acutely conscious of all the mental attributes of those who rush in where angels have feared to tread.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE STAFF COLLEGE, 1904-7

*Count not upon certain promotion,  
But rather to gain it aspire.*

(Law of the Navy.)

“ ARE you the new teacher ?”

I was sitting, feeling very strange and lonely, in the small anteroom at the Staff College which is kept open for staff and students during vacations at that establishment. It was an August evening, and the hot scent of the pines round the cricket-ground was coming in through the open windows. The speaker was one of the students, who had stayed at Camberley to study while most of the others were away. I felt happy at once. The question showed good-fellowship between staff and students, and a vast change from the time when I had been a student myself, and the gap was as wide as that between the head-master of a school and the denizens of the lowest form.

The South African War had wrought a great change at the Staff College. There seemed to be a new spirit in the place, and staff and students were the most inspiring community I have ever had the good luck to come across. At a full muster at dinner in the mess four V.C.'s and

twenty-three D.S.O.'s sat down at the table. The Directing Staff included many whose names are now household words amongst those who study despatches, and know upon whom rested the responsibility for handling the immense British armies of the Great War. Of the students of those years many have acquitted themselves well as general officers up to the rank of Lieutenant-General, and two have been Commanders-in-Chief. Most of them began the war as the Staff Officers who conducted the historic retreat from Mons to the Marne. Of the Staff College staff in 1904 I will select as samples Rawlinson and Hubert Gough (commanded armies on the Western Front), Haking (commanded a Corps), L. E. Kiggell (chief of the General Staff to Sir Douglas Haig), and T. Capper (killed in action when in command of a Division before his brilliant qualities and untiring zeal could raise him to a wider sphere of command). Before I left Camberley, Rawlinson was relieved by Henry Wilson (Chief of the Imperial General Staff), and my colleagues included J. P. du Cane (a Corps commander, afterwards British liaison officer with Marshal Foch), W. P. Braithwaite (Chief of the General Staff in the Dardanelles campaign, and afterwards a Corps commander), and G. M. Harper (a Corps commander). Mention by name of the students who afterwards gained distinction would fill too many pages of these Memories, but I cannot help giving the palm to one who was killed too early in the war to reach the high position in which his sterling character and transcendent qualities would

undoubtedly have placed him, "Johnny" Gough, a very fine soldier, and the best friend I had the good fortune to make amongst the cream of the Army at the Staff College in my time.

I was lucky in having the vacation time to devote to my first course of lectures. Before the new term began an opportunity offered of attending the Army manœuvres, which for that year took the form of a disembarkation at Clacton, where many lessons were learned, especially the lesson that, for a landing on a hostile coast, the holds of troop transports must be packed very carefully, so that what you want to land first is to be found on the top. Neglect of this lesson made the success of the Dardanelles operation impossible, instead of very improbable.

The first step taken to advance the policy of bringing Navy and Army officers more in sympathy with each other was a thoroughly British one, a meal. Admiral Slade was then in charge of the Naval War College at Portsmouth for senior officers and embryo Naval Staff officers, and Henry Wilson was a Colonel in the Staff duties section of the War Office. General Rawlinson and I were both members of the Naval and Military Club, and we had them both to a luncheon, at which I propounded a scheme for naval officers to come to the Staff College to see for themselves the nature of Army work. That was carried out reciprocally, Army officers, after going through the Staff College, attending naval war courses. We also arranged, as an annual event, a combined staff tour for all officers at both establishments,



where we worked out some amphibious operation, and hundreds of officers of the two Services thereby got to know each other and formed friendships. The scheme was so obviously sound that it is a wonder that it had never been tried before. Some folk attribute to it the good feeling which has prevailed between the two Services in the Great War. Some of my old shipmates told me that they were astonished at the zeal and strenuous work of Army officers, as they had laboured under the delusion that they had little to do, and devoted most of their time to sport. The Staff College students, on the other hand, were specially struck by the detailed mechanical knowledge displayed by naval officers of the complicated appliances they had charge of in H.M. ships; that experience they gained when they came down to Portland with me on a visit to the Home Fleet arranged for them by my old friends in the Flag-ship, and also during the naval manœuvres which they attended. Some of them got so keen on the Navy that they aspired at once to the language of seamen, and fell into many pitfalls. I remember one of them telling me with pride in the Staff College anteroom after one of those trips that he had got on splendidly; he had learned all sorts of sea terms, and knew that, when you came in a boat alongside a ship's gangway and were in any difficulties, you could "get hold of the gas-walk." For the uninitiated I will add that, when one of H.M. ships is in harbour, there is a friendly rope near the water-line to add to the convenience of visitors in boats, and that it is called the "guest-warp."

Facing a Staff College audience for my first lecture on Imperial Strategy was rather a severe ordeal. It was decided that only the senior term (officers in their second year) should go through the course, and that there should be no examination, at which I rejoiced greatly. It would be difficult to improve upon the system of training and selection at Camberley in those days. After fulfilling all sorts of conditions before joining, the students were given a course of instruction (theoretical and practical) in their first year, followed by an examination. The rule was that all must get a minimum of marks in that examination to qualify them for the second year course, but the rule was fortunately elastic. Examinations may be the only means of distinguishing between the capacity of people you don't know personally; they are about the worst of all tests of the capacity of people you do know; this was strongly borne out by our experience at the Staff College. I remember one example of an officer failing in the first year's examination and being placed first on the whole list at the end of the course by the unanimous opinion of the whole of the Directing Staff, who knew his war record, and had tested him in every possible way for many months. Every embryo Staff officer was tested physically as well as mentally for Staff work on the assumption that there is no room for bookworms on service, where decisions have to be arrived at under conditions of severe physical strain. Power of command is more difficult to test; in most communities of officers you would

not go far wrong if you picked out the man who talked the least, wherein the fighting services differ from public affairs. On Staff Tours and at practical tests the usual work was a report on a road or position, involving a bicycle ride of thirty miles or thereabouts, then writing orders for an imaginary force for the next day, and then a discussion on the past day's work. But to get back to my own special branch. It was very difficult to get materials together about a British Empire war from a broad point of view, because statesmen, economists, financiers, and the general public had never taken any interest or devoted any study to the question. To take two typical examples. We wanted some financier to lecture upon the effect of finance upon war, what financial steps could be made in peace to help us to win. We could find nobody, either in official, business, or private life, who had ever considered such a subject. Then, in connection with Empire trade, a question cropped up about the relative importance of different trade routes. Nobody knew what proportion of our trade with Australasia passed by the Suez Canal, the Cape of Good Hope, and Cape Horn under normal conditions. I gather that no one knows that even now—at least, I was unable during the last Imperial Conference to lay my hands upon the information.

Then, until the establishment of the Committee of Imperial Defence, no discussion upon defence policy as a whole could take place in the House of Commons. The subject had to be discussed in water-tight compartments, the naval side of it

under the Navy Estimates, the military side of it under the Army Estimates, and so on. The public followed the lead of Parliament in such matters in so far as they bothered their heads about wars at all.

In spite of these drawbacks we managed to get together a good deal of material, and I think the course was of value. It attracted attention outside the College itself, and reached a wider circle, touching the Universities and some Government Departments. My old lecture-notes at the Naval College seven years before came in very useful, especially some about the importance of our shipping in a long war, because our nation cannot make war if there is no nation left to make it, and without our shipping there would soon be no nation in the British Isles. That led naturally to war insurance of shipping. The Royal Commission on Food Supplies reported about that time and drew attention to the question, advocating some action, but the Treasury would have nothing to do with it. I was asked to write some articles for the *Times* upon the subject but they did not produce any result at the time; fortunately other counsels prevailed a few years later. A Government system of war insurance was established just before war broke out in July, 1914; without it, I doubt whether owners, British or neutral, would have traded with our ports in the early days of the war. Too little was known about the naval situation, and underwriters, for want of such knowledge, had made some big mistakes in the Manchurian war, which had made them somewhat nervous.

That war was still going on when I joined the Staff College, and we followed every incident in it with interest. A syndicate of students used to lecture every Saturday on the events of the week, and the teachers pointed the moral. Students' lectures were a great feature of the course. Every student tried to give one, selecting his own subject.

The General Staff of the Army was being established at that time, and the late Mr. H. O. Arnold Forster deserves the chief credit. I do not think that the public in general realise that it is a growth of such recent origin. Members of the Staff College staff were amongst the first to be selected for it, and I was asked to lecture to a big Conference of General Staff officers held at Camberley during the winter vacation in January, 1905. The organiser of the Conference wrote to me afterwards to say that the officers attending had told him that my subject (Imperial Strategy) was the one which appealed to them most; "the subject opened up to them an entirely new train of thought, and I think we all realised our profound ignorance on matters vitally affecting the Empire," which was very encouraging; I certainly realised mine; there's nothing like trying to teach anything to produce that effect on the teacher.

Establishment of the General Staff provided, for the first time, a department of the Staff responsible for preparing for war, basing the preparations upon definite problems, and drawing up plans for the use of the Army in war time. After a study of the Empire and possible war conditions, my own

special branch at Camberley was to set problems for the students to work out for the use of our available "striking force" (that was before the "Expeditionary Force," organised and equipped as a field army, had been established) in various emergencies. We thus crystallised the general teachings of history on war, and came down to practical application. We divided the class of forty students into twos and threes, giving each group one or two foreign countries to deal with, and by that means we worked every year through every conceivable combination against us, and every alliance against such a combination, and drew up a plan for using our available army in each case. The great value of the system was that we all learned much geography from a military point of view, and everyone soon realised that there is no such thing, in an Empire like ours, as a purely military problem; naval conditions must come in every time. Having naval officers at the College, consultation with them on such points was invaluable. The whole business had an atmosphere of reality, which was missing altogether from the Staff College in the days when I was a student there, and it used to be assumed in all our schemes and Staff Tours that armies numbering hundreds of thousands were fighting in the South of England, our Navy being either absent or non-existent; that our nation could exist with our sea communications insecure; and that we had a field army on the Continental scale for home defence, which in those days we had no prospect or intention of maintaining.

In 1904-5 the problem requiring the strongest British army was the defence of the North-West Frontier of India, and this we worked out several times, gaining in knowledge every time. There were many with local knowledge of the problem, both amongst staff and students; Lord Roberts lived only six miles away, and was always ready to help with information and advice. We soon realised that distance, topographical features, and absence of communications made time a very important factor in the problem of defending India against invasion. The serious danger could not be immediate; eighteen months might pass before a strong invading army could reach our frontiers. Mr. Balfour made a speech on the subject, estimating that we should want to send nine Divisions into India by that time to give security. He adopted the creed of the Blue Water School, who maintained that for defence of the United Kingdom it was better to maintain a fleet strong enough to prevent invasion than an army strong enough to deal with the invaders. For the Indian Defence scheme, a home army of sufficient strength to deal with raids on the British Isles could be trained during the year or so of grace accorded by the geographical features of the Indian problem, and our whole regular army could then be sent to India. Our principal military forces, according to the Blue Water School, would be required, not for home defence, but for service elsewhere. There was very strong opposition to the tenets of this School at the time.

Between the years 1905 and 1907 it became clear that the problem overshadowing all others was: What should we do if Germany made an unprovoked attack on France, violating the neutrality of Belgium? We did not know when war would come, but before I left Camberley we knew for certain that, when it did come, Germany would violate Belgian neutrality; we could tell that from railway preparations in the Aix-la-Chapelle—Malmédy area. Amongst the many hypothetical plans of campaign we worked out that one opened up questions of the greatest interest. It was before the great increase in the German army; apart from that, we, like the French, did not give Germany credit for putting her reserve troops in the field as quickly as she did when the time came in 1914, or for concentrating in such great force north of the Meuse. But these points are all well known now, they have been dealt with in books by many writers, including an effort of my own.<sup>1</sup>

To pass to lighter subjects. The drag-hounds afforded the principal amusement in the winter. As the teachers do not draw forage allowance I could not afford to keep a horse to ride with them myself, but used to get plenty of exercise hacking about in the pine-woods on off days, generally riding one of Capper's horses, John Peel, the best mount I ever had in my life, almost human as a companion, and a grey, my favourite colour for a hunter or a charger; I have never known a bad one of that colour. I had one mount on John Peel in a drag-line, and found I had lost

<sup>1</sup> *War Lessons : New and Old.* (John Murray.)



my skill in getting away at the start, and, being ridden off the place I had chosen in the first fence, put him at a huge bank with a rail on the top, which looked as if it would smash. The next thing I knew was that I was standing in the field on the other side of the fence with my hat over my eyes and its rim round my neck, feeling in my empty pockets for a shilling to give a boy who had caught John Peel. Both the stirrup-leathers had come off, and were lying on the ground, and the money out of my pockets was lying under the fence. The only mud mark on the horse was on his back behind the saddle, from which I suppose he hit the rail hard and turned completely over in the air! It was a curious fall, but did us no harm, and he carried me in front of the whole hunt up to the last fence in the second line that day. My other winter amusement was fishing in the Staff College lake, which is full of pike. One of twenty pounds weight was taken during my time by Grant Duff of the Black Watch; the biggest I took myself weighed fourteen.

The work of preparing lectures, setting and looking over the students' schemes, helping to conduct Staff Tours, and so on, was pretty heavy and the best way to get through it was to work until luncheon time, take exercise between two and four, work between tea and dinner, and after dinner until midnight or thereabouts. In the summer term we played cricket, which game I had given up for about seven years, but the "Owl" (village cricket) Staff College team, in

which allowances were made for the non-stooping class of cricketer, was still in existence on the lines described in a previous chapter, and I had great times with them. One of the most enjoyable “ Owl ” matches was at the Naval College at Osborne, where an old shipmate (Alexander-Sinclair) was Captain at the time. We used to take about with us a huge black flag with a white owl on it, presented to me after I had left the *Exmouth*. This was run up on the huge mast at Osborne College, and, when our score was being approached by the opposing batsmen, we saw two small cadets going aloft and taking the halyards in hand. As the winning run was hit, our owl fluttered slowly down to half-mast, greeted by a roar of shrill cheers from the delighted cadets. It was worth while losing that match !

Most of the vacations were spent attending army manœuvres, or at the College, collecting materials for lectures in the library, which is the best of its kind that I know. The mess was always kept open for students who wanted to use it. I cannot leave the subject of that library without mention of the late Colonel Lonsdale Hale, who did so much for it. After lecturing for many years, he settled down in Camberley doing literary and army examination work. He had the welfare of the Staff College much at heart, was always welcomed amongst us, and numbered nearly every distinguished soldier in the Army List amongst his personal friends.

Being stationed so near London and the Admiralty, I was sent for during my time at the

Staff College by Lord Fisher, who had then become First Sea Lord, to serve on a new committee dealing, amongst other things, with the methods of appointing and training Marine officers. I had been wholeheartedly with him when, as Second Sea Lord, he had advocated making use of the services of the existing Marine officers while at sea, and of entering new ones through the *Britannia*, sending them to sea, and then appointing them permanently to the Royal Marines at the age of eighteen. I found that, whether through the influence of new advisers or on his own initiative, he had altered the whole scheme. It was no longer proposed that they should join the Marine Service at eighteen, but at twenty-two or twenty-three, and when they did so they were only to be Marine officers temporarily, remaining on the general list of naval officers, and returning to that service permanently. In other words, the Marines were to have no officers, but naval officers were to be lent temporarily to command them. That to my mind meant the first step, carefully camouflaged, towards abolition of the Marines.

It was rather a harassing experience being obliged to serve on a Committee when, rightly or wrongly, I had so divined its purpose; while the abolition of my corps might possibly be a matter for discussion, I did not think that it was reasonable to expect a Marine officer to do the slaughtering. Also, I knew that such a proposal would be received with dismay by sea-going naval officers in the Fleet whom it was not proposed

to consult. Admiral Douglas was the Chairman, and the majority of the members were civilians or engineer officers. Captains Bacon and Vaughan Lee were the naval members. The latter joined me in a minority report disagreeing with the whole scheme, and the proposed action was not taken. He went to China soon afterwards. I think I was in Lord Fisher's black books for many years afterwards, but I gather that he has now forgiven me, as he was very cordial last time I met him in Pall Mall.

That reminds me of the personal side of my own prospects in our service at that time. Put briefly, I had none. The seniority staircase had not moved upwards fast enough for me. I had been promoted by brevet to Lieutenant-Colonel for work in the South African War, and had been given accelerated promotion to the rank of Brevet-Colonel for subsequent Staff service, but I was still only a Major in the Marine Artillery, and the horoscope showed that I should be retired in that rank at the age of forty-eight, unless there was a murrain amongst the higher ranks—the promotion moving-staircase, if your age allows you to remain upon it, carries you right up to the rank of full General, and I don't think that up to that time any R.M.A. General had ever died while he was on the active list—so I applied for a half-pay Lieutenant-Colonelcy in the Army. This proposal was rejected, I believe on the plea that I belonged to the Admiralty, by the Selection Board at the War Office, who were doubtless being bombarded with applications by army

majors similarly situated, so I settled down to the prospect of embarking upon a new career when I reached the age of forty-eight.

Here I will interpose my promised note<sup>1</sup> upon the uselessness of brevet rank to Marine officers. Brevet rank is instituted in the Army so that an officer who has come to the front on active service can be pushed on in the higher ranks without interfering with promotion in his regiment. The highest regimental rank in the Army is that of Lieutenant-Colonel; after promotion to the Colonels' list an officer belongs to the general list of Colonels in the Army. A Brevet-Colonel takes his brevet date when he gets on to the Colonels' list, which fact may jump him up nearly to the top of the list instead of beginning at the bottom. In the Marines regimental seniority runs right up to the rank of full General, so brevet rank gives no advantage at all. It all sounds rather complicated, and like the riddle about that man's father and my father's son, but the effect of it was that, when I did get on to the Colonel's list, I lost eight years in seniority compared with the Army. If I had prosed on about a personal matter at such length in a wardroom mess, my assembled messmates would probably have implored me to "tell them more about myself." The reader, if he is interested in the Marine service, will forgive me; it brings out one of the strongest features of that service, that nothing is allowed to interfere with the vested interests of those who have places in the promotion queue.

<sup>1</sup> See page 212.

All work must be done for the service, and not for individual advancement. You can do as much work as you like, but you must not profit by it at the expense of brother officers. It is a wonderful system for keeping up friendships, as compared with professions in which members progress in the world by climbing over each other's shoulders; but it's a sore temptation to sit and "let the wind blow you along," unless you have the luck to be given work into which you cannot help putting your last ounce, because of its interest and public importance.

I feel, on reading over this chapter, that I have not given nearly a clear enough idea of what those years at the Staff College meant to me. The keenness of the candidates for Staff employment there was indescribable. My colleagues on the Staff were amongst the most brilliant men in the Army, as they have shown by their subsequent record, and they were all inspiring as teachers, but they sowed on good soil. At the end of the Christmas term the practice was for each teacher to put some special inspiration upon future work into his last lecture to the passing-out class. In one of my own efforts in that direction I thought that I could not do better than tell them this story:

A friend of mine, a soldier, who had been invalided home during the South African War, was sitting at a big dinner-party next to a General officer. There had been a good deal of comparison, mostly from outside, and not in the Army itself, between the relative merits of the

British armies in Natal under Sir Redvers Buller, and in the main advance under Lord Roberts. The General of my story was criticising the conduct of the war by one of these eminent leaders, whose action my friend ventured to defend. "Which side did you serve on?" said the General. "On the British side," was the reply, and the conversation was abruptly changed.

The story went well with my audience. The sequel to it was that, soon afterwards, I happened to be the member of the Directing Staff whose duty it was for that year to show the students in one by one for an interview with a very high War Office official, who had come down for the annual inspection of the College. Every one of them came out laughing, and I asked the reason. "He asked us all which side we were on in the South African War, and we all wanted to say, 'On the British side!'" was the explanation. There have been times in the Services, as in the early Christian community, when there has been a tendency to follow one leader or another rather than the good of the Service, but good-bye to discipline and efficiency if such tendencies are not stamped upon, whether in the Navy, Army, or Air Force. At least, that was the moral of all the teaching at the Staff College and in the Navy in my day—but this is a digression from my narrative.

Towards the close of 1907, when my time at the Staff College was nearly over, I was much cheered by hearing that the Director of Military Operations (an old fellow-student) had asked for my

services as Head of the First Section of his department, which is about the best Colonel's appointment on the General Staff at the War Office. Henry Wilson, the Commandant, as my Chief, backed up the proposal very strongly indeed, and it looked like a certainty. Then, in December, a week before the end of the term, the news was broken to me that the proposal had been turned down by the Chief of the General Staff, who did not want a Marine officer in the appointment. It was one of those moments when you *have* to pretend you are pleased, for fear of giving yourself away and becoming that insufferable bore, a man with a grievance! I managed to put a good face on it somehow. Then, soon after going on leave, I dined with another old fellow-student at Camberley, Count Gleichen, who was also in the War Office at the time, and he told me that I had been chosen for something bigger still, Chief of the General Staff (the appointment was called Brigadier-General, General Staff) in South Africa, where we then maintained a considerable army. It was another example of the saying that "You never know your luck" in the Service.

The record had been broken, and I was to be the first Marine officer to hold such a high Army appointment. There were only two other Brigadier-Generals on the General Staff of the field army then, one at Aldershot, and one at Salisbury for the Southern Command. My regimental rank was still only that of Major, and I felt as if I had suddenly been caught in the



proverbial flowing tide in the affairs of men which leads on to fortune. At the same time, it was impossible to help feeling a certain amount of trepidation before embarking on the unknown with so little practical experience. There were then three brigades of infantry in South Africa, a big force of cavalry, a number of brigades of horse and field artillery, R.E. troops and companies, and a very large administrative establishment, to provide for expansion of the army if necessary. There was also the garrison for the defences of the naval bases in the Cape Peninsula. April, 1908, found me on board the Union Castle mail-boat *Walmer Castle* at Southampton, enjoying the first advantage of my sudden exaltation, a large cabin, reserved for my exclusive use, in a South African mail-steamer.

## CHAPTER XII

### SOUTH AFRICA, 1908-13

*"Take thy fate as it comes with a smile."*

(Law of the Navy.)

DURING the years 1908-13 South Africa was the best of all countries in the world to live in from the point of view of public affairs. History was being made there, and "Union was in the air" as the late President Steyn described the situation to me. I had the luck about that time to come across two books, F. S. Oliver's "Alexander Hamilton," and Gertrude Atherton's "The Conqueror," one enabling me to trace in South Africa forces similar to those which brought about the Union of the United States of America, the other making the actors in that great drama live again before my eyes. Of these matters more anon.

The question of my passage to South Africa was in the balance at the War Office for many weeks, and the knotty point which delayed matters was settled only just in time for me to send my heavy baggage to the Union Castle liner *Walmer Castle* at Southampton in April, 1908. This was the difficulty: Until I took my foot off the land at Southampton I was a Colonel, when both my feet had left the land I should be a Brigadier-General. There would be an instant of

time when half of me would be one and the other half would be the other. General officers were allowed passages in mail-steamers, Colonels were not, they travelled officially, at less cost to the public, in the slower "intermediate" boats. Fortunately for me, the great folk who deal with such thorny problems in the War Office finally settled that one in my favour, after six weeks' consideration; so I had the good luck to travel out with my new chief, Lord Methuen, his family and personal staff.

There was an interesting little incident at Southampton just as we started; the guard of honour furnished for Lord Methuen (who became a General officer Commanding-in-Chief as he put his foot on board, even as I became a Brigadier-General) consisted of Territorials, and they were the first body of the new Territorial Army to parade. The force had only come into existence for a couple of days, and the first great step had thus been taken to combine in one army, with an army sentiment, the various branches of our forces which had hitherto looked upon themselves as things apart. The patriotic volunteer forces which preceded the Territorials were the product of a go-as-you-please system, under which units of all arms and branches of the Service had grown up sporadically, with no thought of the proportion of each required to form a field army, and with neither the equipment, the organisation, nor the staff needed if they had been in the right proportion. The credit for the resulting advance in efficiency rests with Lord Haldane; there

was a good deal of opposition and strong sentiment to be overcome, and this he succeeded in achieving.

Voyages in the South African mail-steamers are very much alike, and vary only with the changes of passengers and companionship. A description of one covers them all: the partings from friends at Southampton and the start at about half-past four; the run down Southampton Water and on to the Needles watching the land, and, if you are wise, making things comfortable in your cabin before you emerge into the open sea; sizing up the other passengers, and arranging with the steward your place at meals in the saloon, bearing in mind that you will sit with the same table-companions for seventeen days; those are the preliminaries. Then there is the three-day run to Madeira, with, according to the weather, about half the passengers visible, the remainder having disappeared into their cabins for reasons connected with their physical well-being. The competitions for the bathrooms are a standing feature of all voyages; by the time you reach Madeira things have generally settled down in that matter, and you have fitted into your place in the queue. After Madeira, a delightful and restful run of fourteen days to Table Bay, making what seem to be lifelong friendships, with folk whom you probably never see again, over the various sports and amusements with which the passengers beguile the time. The first sight of the Southern Cross marks an epoch in the voyage, and from that night onwards the days slip by until the routine

of life on deck is upset by piles of mail-bags invading your favourite promenade and the favourite corner where you have been wont to keep your deck-chair, an indispensable article of your equipment for the voyage. You know then that early the next morning you will arrive in Table Bay, alongside solid earth again, and have to take up the threads of life after they have begun to seem so remote as to be almost non-existent. Mail-steamers start and arrive nearly as punctually as express trains.

The day of Lord Methuen's arrival at Cape Town was a day of functions and of rapid changes in raiment from the splendours and discomforts of full dress uniform to the comfort of cool flannels. Memories of the four years which passed until I saw him off on his return to England after his great work in South Africa are so crowded that it is difficult to sort them out. The General Staff activities were of two sorts, training and preparing for war the British army of occupation, and advising the local Governments about the defence forces to be raised when the time came for its withdrawal. Taking them in order: South Africa is a grand country for training troops, especially cavalry, and in the annual manoeuvres we could reproduce active service conditions almost exactly, and leave the commanders of the forces a free hand to do what they liked and range over the country as they liked without being handicapped, as in England, by game preservers and "Out-of-Bounds" notices. The Boer farmers were excellent landowners to deal with if you

studied their ways and observed the etiquette of a call upon them, for which an almost unlimited capacity for drinking coffee was a *sine qua non*; on one trek, visiting farmers in a proposed manœuvre area, our record (Lord Methuen's and my own) was fifty-two large cups of coffee or tea each, between meals, in a two-days' drive.

The British troops in South Africa in those days were in splendid order by the end of each training season, and it was a luxury to see battalions of grown men in the pink of condition, after the battalions in England of weedy youths under training and awaiting their turn to be drafted abroad to the linked battalions. I can quote two examples of physical endurance, both on hot days under a burning sun. The Yorkshire Light Infantry on the last days of their battalion training at the Cape did a thirty-four mile march in heavy marching order under service conditions without turning a hair; and a battalion of the Hampshire regiment, in manœuvres in the Transvaal, did a twenty-eight mile march, starting in the middle of the night; then, having just settled down in bivouac at the end of their trek, they were suddenly turned out to attack a position three miles away, which they carried out with zest just after dark, and turned out early the next morning for a long march and a big battle. The great difficulty was in drawing up manœuvre schemes so that both the fast-moving cavalry and the slow-moving infantry should both bring off battles, without which manœuvres are dull affairs, but

such schemes were devised every year under Lord Methuen's direction.

One of the most interesting branches of the General Staff work was supervision of map-making, especially in Basutoland and in the wild parts of Cape Colony bordering on the frontiers of German South-West Africa. The need of maps was very apparent, but it was difficult to get enough money for making them, so the War Office had devised a scheme to use for the purpose regimental officers serving in the command, in spite of the protests of commanding officers who needed their services with their regiments and resented the arrangement. With the officers themselves the work was popular, providing, as it did, a chance of seeing new country and a change from regimental routine. Several did brilliant work, and amongst them I cannot forbear mention of the late Major M. C. Dobson of the R.F.A., who mapped the whole of Basutoland, a very mountainous country, working alone in the wildest districts never before visited by a white man, without any trouble with the local native chiefs. There is one good story of a battle with red tape regulations that occurred, not on the Basutoland side, but on the other side, the Kalahari Desert bordering German South-West Africa; we will call it the "Tale of the General Staff Donkeys." In those days there had been a great outcry for "decentralisation of financial responsibility" in the Army, and this is how it worked out: One of the mapping officers, with a surveying party, equipped with all the necessary

instruments and stores, arrived at the edge of desert country, where his transport animals were no longer of any use because they could not stand the climate. The only way to get on was to buy donkeys, and trek on with them. Accordingly he “exercised his discretion,” sold the useless transport at a good price, bought donkeys with the proceeds, and credited the balance to the public, carrying on his work without delay. The papers about the transaction came through my office, where his procedure was approved as most reasonable. Then the trouble began. It appeared that he had broken nearly all the financial regulations which act as a brake upon the exercise of discretion. The transport found useless for further trekking should not have been sold, it should have been sent all the way from the German frontier to the remount depot in Natal, right across Africa, there to be dealt with in accordance with the regulations. An indent for donkeys should have been sent to the same place through circuitous channels, and donkeys might ultimately have been purchased and supplied. Meanwhile the survey party would have remained idle, and some thousands of pounds for many weeks’ services not rendered would have been wasted on another vote, with which remounts were not concerned. When the storm of paper minutes arose I appealed at once for mercy to the head of the Administrative Staff, the Major-General in charge of Administration, a post established on the recommendation of the Esher “Triumvirate” to save the General Commanding-in-Chief from



being snowed under with such office worries. To ensure the adherence of the Major-General in charge of Administration to regulations were several financial authorities, the head of the Army Pay Department of the command, a representative of the Finance Branch of the War Office, and a high official representing the Public Accounts Committee of the House of Commons, all these being provided with a large and lynx-eyed staff. The Major-General<sup>1</sup> in question was an experienced soldier, a capable administrator, and very human and practical in disposition, so, somehow or other, the matter was squared, and the storm subsided. Imagine my dismay when, six months afterwards, the storm was raised again by another Department, the Ordnance. It appeared that my enterprising officer had been so meticulously careful of his stores that on completion of the work he had handed in to the Ordnance Department the bits of string and odds and ends of rope which serve as donkey-harness in those regions, and there was no column in the Ordnance Department ledgers for donkey-harness ! I think the tale, apart from its humorous aspect, is worth telling as an example of the completeness of financial control under Army regulations in time of peace. Such a system must always collapse in time of war, or disaster would result; and, from what I have seen of war expenditure, I should say that in war-time financial control was altogether abandoned.

Service under Lord Methuen was a splendid

<sup>1</sup> Sir F. Dorward, K.C.B.

training in staff work. While always commanding-in-chief (he left no doubt whatever about that), he left all subordinates free to work in their own way, judging them only by results. Apart from his military command, few people know of the work he did for the Empire in the political sphere during those critical years by the simplicity and directness of his dealings with Boer and Briton alike, thus establishing a South African spirit above all racial animosities. (I hope he will forgive me this personal reference with its suspicion of that, to him, unclean thing, advertisement. If he does not I shall plead as an excuse his references in public speeches to my own humble share in the work.) It was quite clear to him that, whether union between the four self-governing Colonies in South Africa was brought about or not, there was one undeniable common interest between them, and that was defence. With the hearty concurrence of Lord Selborne, then Governor of the Transvaal and High Commissioner for South Africa, Lord Methuen got into communication with the Governments of all four Colonies, and with the Administrator of Southern Rhodesia, and prevailed upon them to appoint representatives to serve on a Committee on mutual defence. It was decided that the Committee should meet at Durban simultaneously with the great conference on union between the leading statesmen of all political parties in the Colonies. I was to be the Chairman, and my first step was to wire to the biggest hotel in Durban to provide a round table, and

a small conference room to contain it, London experience having taught me the value of round tables, as compared with long ones, to ensure agreement. I must add that I discovered afterwards that I might have learned this from Bacon, who mentions the point in his Essays. I have never known a Committee which sat at a round table produce a minority report, and we all agreed upon ours, although the subject was approached from widely divergent directions. The only question about which I was in doubt was whether General Hertzog the representative of the Orange Free State, would agree to sign the recommendations, which included compulsory cadet training for every white boy in what were then the South African Colonies. It was not easy to foresee General Hertzog's attitude upon any question. In the end all went well.

We were all very much interested in the main conference, and anxious to know whether it would result in union or in a continuance of inter-Colonial squabbles which contained the germs of future wars. One morning we had news which showed us that all was going well. A member of our Committee came in, and said, "It's all right ! I've just come from the beach, where they were all bathing together. Louis Botha was ducking Georgie Farrar in the sea, and old Abraham Fischer was sitting on the shore, in a gaudy dressing-gown and a straw hat, cheering and laughing."

To obtain a parallel to that incident in this country we should have to imagine that "Home

Rule all round " had been introduced, and that, as a sign of reunion being in the air, the Prime Minister of England was seen ducking the Leader of the Opposition in the sea, with the Prime Minister of Scotland watching and laughing on the shore.

In January, 1909, I went to England for about ten days, and attended a General Staff Conference at Camberley. The idea was to keep the General Staff officers in the United Kingdom and in all the Dominions and India in touch with each other, so that all the local military forces in the Empire, should be trained, equipped, and if possible organised, on the same lines. My Durban Committee had already done that for the four South African Colonies, and the way had so been prepared for one combined South African Defence Force, if the movement towards Union should succeed. I had also got into touch with Canada, Australia, and New Zealand by correspondence, exchanging information, and when Sir Douglas Haig went to India as Chief of the General Staff there, he took the matter up and established a regular system of interchanging monthly circular letters all round the Empire. That system made a tremendous difference, and helped towards the united Empire Army, trained and organised on the same lines, which by the end of the Great War was the strongest military force fighting on the side of the Allies. We had a very useful conference at Camberley, and a renewal of old friendships, and after my ten days' glimpse of England I returned to South Africa in the *Norman* in February, 1909.

Travelling about South Africa with Lord Methuen on inspection tours was a very pleasant experience. He generally took me and one A.D.C., who made all the arrangements, and as Kruger's old railway coach was reserved for Lord Methuen's exclusive use we travelled in comfort, and had no bother about hotels or places to put up in; the coach had on it a kitchen, Lord Methuen's bed-sittingroom, a bathroom (bath very small, and not nearly big enough to have held "Oom Paul" we decided), a bedroom, with two bunks for the staff, and a room to sit in and have our meals. The journeys were hot and dusty by day, but delightful in the evenings and early mornings. Besides the railway journeys we also did long treks in various parts of the country, passing on the way much ground fought over in the South African War, including Modder River, Magersfontein, and from Mafeking through the Transvaal, south of the Magaliesburg Mountains, across the route of Christian de Wet in one of his marvellous escapes in the war. As an example of the growing good feeling between Boer and Briton, I remember at one farm, where we outspanned for a short time, we called upon the inmates, and Lord Methuen asked the owner: "Who burned all your farm buildings down?" "You did!" was the reply (quite a mistake, as a matter of fact); and another added, "But it was my nephew that shot you!" We saw some instructions being given, and when we left we found that a sack full of their best oranges had been picked and packed behind one of our Cape-carts!

Events marched rapidly in the autumn (spring-time in England) of 1909 in South Africa. After the Conference at Durban the big convention, with representatives of men on both sides in public life, assembled in conclave at Cape Town, and the constitution for the future Union of South Africa was agreed upon, a schedule being attached about the Protectorates, Basutoland and Swaziland, which remained under the British Government, represented by Lord Selborne as High Commissioner. Rhodesia stood out, and did not join the Union. Both sides in politics in each Colony being represented at the convention, they had practically plenary powers to approve of union, but the Natal Government decided to have a referendum, as the Press in that Colony was strongly opposing the new Constitution. It is an interesting point, showing how far the Press may fail to represent public opinion, that union was carried by referendum by a huge majority, something like five or six to one.

This is a collection of my memories as a Marine, and not as a private individual, so I have forbore to mention private affairs, except occasionally the emptiness of my pocket, as being typical of the Marine service, but I will here mention marriage at Pretoria on June 1st, 1909, and settling down in our first house, near Government House at Bryntirion, near Pretoria. It was a delightful spot, with a kopje in the garden from the top of which you had an all-round view, extending for over thirty miles in some directions. The guests at our first dinner-party were Lord

Methuen and General Smuts, and there was much useful talk between them, which bore fruit in due season. Then came the Imperial Conference on naval and military matters in London, held because the German menace became obvious when they secretly accelerated the building programme of their navy. At the same time the South African Act was passing through the British Parliament, and delegates from all the four Colonies went to London for the occasion. I went as a sort of freelance as naval and military adviser, and my wife and I travelled in the same mail-steamer as the delegates, Generals Botha and Smuts; Mr. Hull, Sir Percy Fitzpatrick, and Sir George Farrar, from the Transvaal; Mr. Abraham Fischer and General Hertzog from the Free State (then called the Orange River Colony); and Messrs. Moor, Watt, and Plowman from Natal. President and Mrs. Steyn accompanied the Delegation. The Cape Colony representatives, headed by Mr. J. X. Merriman, travelled by another boat.

Splendid progress was made at the London Conference in August in bringing all the Dominions together in army matters, and a general policy of uniformity was agreed upon. In naval matters progress was less satisfactory, partly because no proposals were put forward by the Admiralty until a few hours before the Conference met, so the delegates had had no time to think matters over. From the naval point of view it ended in a sort of go-as-you-please, each Dominion consulting the Admiralty separately, if they wished

to do so, about local needs. It is interesting to recall the wording of a letter from the late Sir John Colomb, the pioneer of Empire Defence, to the Prime Minister, dated May 8th, 1909:

“Hitherto no broad general line of policy has been laid down, and I believe that this is mainly due to the want of a full and joint enquiry beforehand by a representative of the Imperial Commission . . . this outburst of recognition of common interest in maritime security, from all parts of the Empire, seems now to offer a unique opportunity for statesmanship which, if lost, may never recur.”

Sir John Colomb died three weeks later, before the Conference assembled.

It was very interesting to undergo the experience of visiting London as delegates from the Dominions, and being treated as if we were very important folk. There were all sorts of public and private entertainments given in the honour of the delegates, and it was great fun being asked how we liked England by high personages. I think we enjoyed most a banquet, followed by a reception, at the Foreign Office, and a garden-party at Hatfield House. The official banquet was for men only, ladies came only to the reception; and I should like to tell a little story about Lord Roberts to show what made everyone with whom he came in contact so devoted to him. I found myself between him and the Prime Minister talking over the proposals for National Service, then before the public, and when some of the guests for the reception began to arrive



excused myself in order to meet my wife at the door. Lord Roberts insisted on coming too, to make her acquaintance, and stood by the door refusing to budge for anybody for twenty-five minutes until she turned up, all sorts of interesting and important folk having tried to tempt him away.

We were in England from July 16th until we left Southampton in the *Kildonan Castle* on September 11th, and for variety and interest those were about the most crowded weeks I ever spent. When my attendance was required in London at the Conference we were the guests of the Transvaal Government at the Hyde Park Hotel, where we lived in great state. Amongst the official entertainments we much enjoyed being the guests of the Admiralty in the R.M.S. *Adriatic*, a huge liner, in which we followed the Royal Yacht round the lines during an inspection of the Fleet at Spithead by the King. Referring to an old programme I see that *Dreadnought*, *Bellerophon*, *Superb*, *Temeraire* (battleships), and *Indomitable*, *Inflexible*, *Invincible* (battle cruisers), were the "Dreadnoughts" completed by that date.

Of the official speeches delivered in London that summer the best, undoubtedly, was General Smuts' after-dinner speech at the Guildhall. It was reported nearly verbatim in *The Times* the next morning. After a little dig at us for our jumpiness and tendency to panic (the papers were full just then of mysterious aircraft in the sky over England), he put the Dominion view,

"They are young countries wanting to be developed, asking for the investment of capital; and war could only mean ruin and disaster to them," and he protested against any idea of a warlike spirit animating the Empire. Then he added that if the necessity arose—he hoped it never would—all the experience and endurance which had been gathered together amongst South Africans during one of the most prolonged and difficult wars of modern times would be at the disposal of the defence of South Africa and of the Empire. He was given a tremendous reception, and his promise on behalf of South Africa has since been nobly fulfilled. After that dinner we went to Selfridge's together to see the monoplane in which M. Bleriot had that day (July 28th, 1909) made the first flight across the Channel. Experts tell me that the pilots of to-day would think twice before attempting the feat in a machine with such low engine-power.

The whole of that visit to England was not taken up with official work. We had a quiet little five-day holiday on the Itchen at the Bush Inn at Ovington, a good friend having given me leave to fish his water just below that spot, extending as far as the hatch at the top of the Ovington Park water which was rented by Sir Edward Grey. It was a delightful experience. I have a note of one day's fishing when trout rose in a desultory fashion from 9.30 a.m. until 8 p.m., and their taste in fly-patterns varied more than I have ever known before or since. That little holiday was a welcome rest from official functions.

During the whole time we were constantly on the move, ending up with a dance given by my old corps the R.M.A. at Eastney, and embarking for South Africa the next day, somewhat exhausted, and glad of the rest of a voyage.

Work at Pretoria was very strenuous for the next year, both in connection with the British Army and the local defence forces. I remember giving a lecture at the Johannesburg University College upon the need for a Military College in South Africa on the lines of Kingston College in Canada, which idea was well received both in the English and the Dutch Press. The only controversy was about bi-lingualism in words of command, about which there was a strong feeling for and against. Mention of bi-lingualism reminds me of two stories on the subject. In accordance with a provision in the Constitution, without which the Union would never have been accomplished, both languages were treated equally, so much so that at the railway-stations everything was at once labelled both in Dutch and in English with the utmost care. There was some difficulty because the Dutch were accustomed to use the English words for many things. For instance, the word platform. But this was not to be encouraged, so the word **PERRON** was painted up under the word **PLATFORM**. "Vat is dat perron?" an old Boer was heard to say to a crony. "Dat is de Englesche for platform," was the reply! Sitting next to General Hertzog at an official luncheon with Ministers at the House of Assembly at Cape Town one day, I thought that I would

try whether I could get him to relax a little, as he always took himself so seriously. I told him that I knew how anxious he was for equality between the races, and that his absolute fairness to both was well known, so I knew that he would be grateful for a hint from one who knew what the English-speaking community said, in order that he might smooth things over. I had just seen out of the window notices, **KEEP OFF THE GRASS**, on the grass-plots outside the House of Assembly, with no notice in Dutch to the same effect. So I told him that there was a ferment about it, and the South Africans of British origin thought that it meant that only those of Dutch origin were allowed to walk on those grass-plots. For some time he did not know whether to take it seriously or not, but at last saw the joke.

That year was marked by what I believe to have been a deliberate attempt by some unprincipled folk to get up a scare about war with the Basutos. It seems to have extended widely, as an officer not serving in the command sought out Lord Methuen, who was trout-fishing in Natal, to offer his services against the Basutos in case of war. I was in Pretoria at the time, and only heard of it afterwards; but from what I knew of my chief I should have been sorry to have been that applicant. Lord Selborne was then leaving for England, and in order, I think to show clearly what he thought of the scare, he rode across Basutoland himself on his way to the coast, Lady Selborne going with him. He did not see the

official function for establishment of the Union which he had done so much to bring about.

Lord Gladstone, first Governor-General of South Africa, arrived at Pretoria towards the end of May, 1910. I attended his official reception at the railway-station, where a small contretemps occurred which he took in very good part. The guard of honour was drawn up opposite to the door of the carriage, and the mounted escort was drawn up along the road in front. When he got near the carriage he turned aside to inspect the guard of honour, and the soldier holding open the door for him slammed it to. The postillions, thinking that Lord Gladstone had got into the carriage, drove on. The escort trotted away on ahead, and the whole procession of the empty carriage proceeded a long way before it could be stopped. It was impossible to back the whole cortège, and there was no room to turn, so Lord Gladstone had to proceed the first part of the way on foot. He was sworn in on May 31st, and on November 4th the Duke of Connaught, representing the King, opened the first Parliament of the Union of South Africa at Cape Town with due ceremony, and read out a cable message from King George:

“ Although it has been ordained that I should not be with you on this great occasion, my thoughts and prayers are to-day for South Africa and for her lasting Union. I earnestly trust that, for the sake of the people as a whole, your great country may, by God’s blessing, and under wise guidance and statesmanship, progress from year to year, ever increasing in wisdom, happiness, and prosperity.”

General Botha was the first Prime Minister, and the other portfolios were allotted as follows:

Interior, Defence, and Mines	..	General Smuts.
Railways .. .. .	..	Mr. J. W. Sauer.
Justice .. .. .	..	General Hertzog.
Education .. .. .	..	Mr. F. S. Malan.
Finance .. .. .	..	Mr. H. C. Hull.
Lands .. .. .	..	Mr. Abraham Fischer.
Native Affairs .. .. .	..	Mr. H. Burton.
Commerce .. .. .	..	Mr. F. R. Moor.
Telegraphs, Posts, and Public Works .. .. .	..	Mr. J. P. de V. Graaf.
Minister without Portfolio	..	Dr. O'Grady Gubbins.

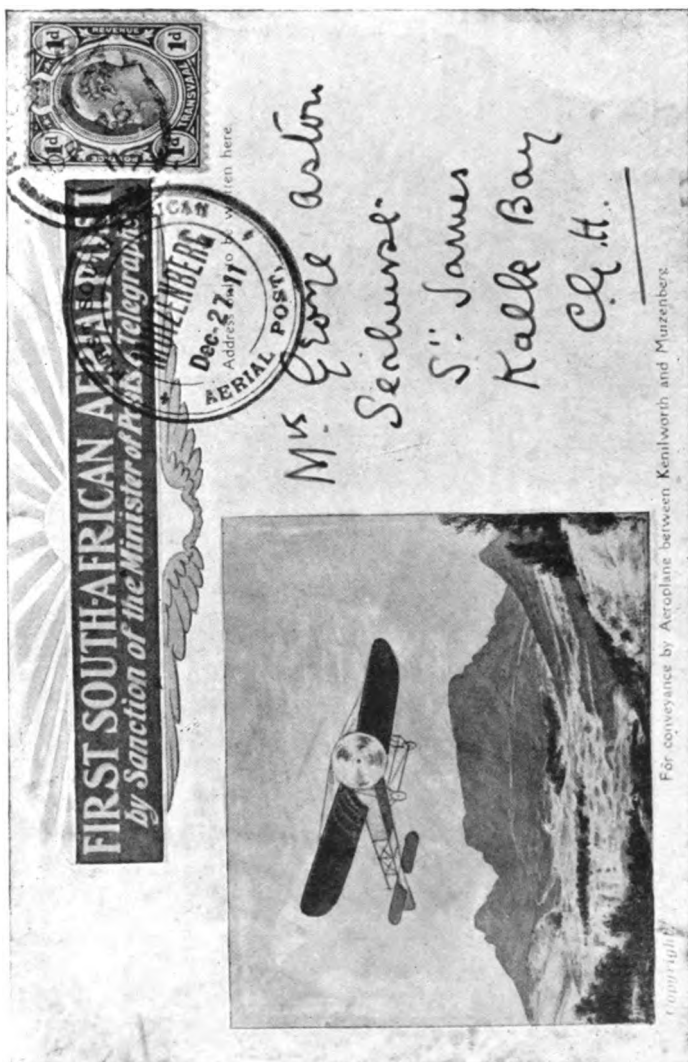
From the date of the establishment of Union the seat of Government was at Cape Town whenever Parliament was sitting, and at Pretoria for the remainder of the year, and Lord Methuen arranged that I should have my office at Cape Town when the Governor-General was there. Lord Methuen kept constantly in touch with General Smuts as Minister of Defence, and had a good deal to do with advising about the clauses of the new Defence Act which became law in 1912.

There were several incidents in the years 1910-12 which have gained increased interest since the events of 1914, as they indicate German policy in those days. Before the Union the Cape Government had been considering the establishment of an important long-range wireless station at the Cape, and one was erected immediately after Union. The technical adviser about sites of wireless stations along the coast was a German, and the site chosen for the big long-range station

was an exposed one, close to the shore, in a position practically impossible to defend against bombardment from the sea. Then, again, when the defence of Durban was being considered, it was found that the mining rights for excavating on the Bluff, obviously a good site for batteries, were in German hands. There was rather an interesting (and, I believe, unrecorded) incident in German South-West Africa at the time of the war scare in 1911. Just about the date of the Agadir crisis something went wrong with the cable from Swakopmund, and communication was interrupted. The German troops on the coast at once moved inland, taking with them all the gold in the banks at that place and at Luderitz Bay. That gave a good indication of their intended policy when war did break out.

Christmas, 1911, I spent at the Cape as usual, and it is interesting to note that on December 28th the first letters were carried by aeroplane in South Africa. Flying conditions in the neighbourhood of Table Mountain were difficult for the aircraft of low engine-power of those days, and the attempt had several times to be postponed. I add here a facsimile of one of the first letter-cards sent in South Africa by aeroplane.

That summer General Smuts asked me to remain in South Africa for a few months after my four years on the General Staff had been completed in order to train the South African Staff officers required to administer the new Defence Act, and to train the new forces, and I accepted his invitation. In January, 1912, I



SOUTH AFRICAN AIR MAIL, 1911 : THE FIRST POSTCARD CARRIED BY AIR IN SOUTH AFRICA.

Facing page 280.





took some of the leave I had saved up and spent a short time in England, during which time I gained my first experience of Court functions since my appointment as A.D.C. to the King. In March I returned to South Africa in time to hear the debates on the new Defence Act in the House of Assembly, and there meditated upon the desperate opposition which such an Act would have met with in the House of Commons. Apart from the masterly and conciliatory handling of opposition to various clauses of the Act by General Smuts, what struck me most was a passionate speech by a Boer from the back benches in support of the clause introducing universal cadet training, replying to opposition by those who stigmatised participation in the defence of one's country as “ militarism.” The old man took as his text, “ The better the soldier the better the Christian,” and spoke from deep conviction. The clause passed, with a proviso, to meet genuine conscientious objection, allowing parents to prevent their boys from being so trained. As far as I know, no parent has exercised this power, and the opposition was not genuine, but a move to catch the votes of those to whom political parrot-cries appeal.

In April Lord Methuen left in the *Walmer Castle* for England, leaving behind him many friends and, as far as I know, not a single enemy in South Africa. I spent the time until July in mastering every detail of the Defence Act, getting up lectures, and preparing a scheme of training for British and Boer Staff officers at the training

centre at Bloemfontein. The College was to be established in the building formerly the residence of the President of the Orange Free State Republic, and afterwards of the Governor, and my first association with the building dated from 1900, when I went there for orders during the South African War, and saw Lord Roberts for the first time. The candidates for Staff employment were a most interesting community. About half were British and about half Dutch. They were chosen from all shades of political opinion, a very necessary arrangement, because the success of the Act would depend upon their knowledge of how best to handle personnel varying from the cosmopolitan mining population of Johannesburg to the stubborn backveld Boers. The opening ceremony was conducted by General Smuts on July 1st, 1912. I think that the great importance of the occasion was felt by all present; the whole future of South Africa would depend upon whether those assembled could get on well together, feeling a common interest in defence, and whether we could foster a broad South African spirit of patriotism, over-riding the racial and class interests and inter-Colonial rivalry with its seeds of the strife that had formerly rent the country. We had there extremists on both sides, from the "Imperialist" to the avowed "Republican." Several had been generals of the Boer forces in the South African War, only nine years before. In my opening address I made an appeal pointing out that upon them, more than upon any other public servants, the success of the new South

African nation would depend. At the end of the course they would be scattered over the whole country, and the whole spirit of the new defence force, which in some form or other would comprise all the manhood of the country, would depend upon their getting on well together, and upon their spreading all over South Africa the feeling of good-fellowship engendered during their sojourn at the school. General Smuts pointed the moral in an inspiring address, ending with the peroration:

“ We want a force here that will defend South Africa against any force that may come. . . . The nations want to devour each other, we do not want to be devoured. . . . South Africa must have, not a Boer army, nor an English army, but a South African army, consisting of the white people of all races in the country. It is such an army that these fifty officers have been called upon to bring into being. If you succeed, as we believe you will, you will not only produce an army, but a nation.”

I remember when we were living near Muizenberg, in Cape Colony, standing on the beach there, watching the surf-bathers. Each bather stands as far away from the shore as he dares, holding a little plank, and waiting for a great wave to come surging in from the sea. His object is to leap up just at the right moment, and to be carried forward, floating on his plank on the breaking crest of the wave, until he is thrown up safely on dry land. If he jumps at the wrong time, or if he fails to hold his little plank straight to the wave direction, the process is a painful one for himself. He is engulfed and tumbled over and

over in painful contact with the hard edges of the plank and the harder pebbles of the beach; his only consolation, if he can rise to the occasion and feel that way, is that the wave goes on all the same. Those surf-bathers have always reminded me of people whose destiny takes them to the top of any big public movement, and I felt uncommonly like one of them during those months at Bloemfontein. They say that a sense of humour is one of the two most precious equipments of life, and we certainly got some amusement out of those times, and the humour tided over occasional moments of anxiety. I cannot express too strongly my gratitude to my chief helper in the work, Major J. J. Collyer, of the Cape Mounted Riflemen, now a Brigadier-General and Chief of the General Staff to the South African Forces. Largely owing to his help all went well in the end, and by Christmas-time fifty trained Staff officers were distributed all over South Africa, ready to conduct the registration and embody the whole manhood of the country in the new defence forces, which have since saved the country, first from rebellion, and then from a German invasion. The same forces have fought in four or more theatres of operations in the Great War.

The work at Bloemfontein was followed by a very pleasant tour through the George district in the Cape province, before leaving Durban for England via the East Coast route.

That voyage was a wonderful experience. The scene on the forecastle at each stopping-place, and during the short trips from port to port

where cargo is dropped or landed, was full of constant interest. We made great friends with the chief officer, and a poem indited to him may give some idea of the voyage:

### ODE TO A CHIEF OFFICER.

#### 1.

Listen, ye Muses, to this brief  
Poem devoted to the Chief.

#### 2.

Simple seaman thou by trade,  
Clad in blue, with golden braid;  
Round you centres every topic,  
Scenes on deck kaleidoscopic.

#### 3.

Winches rattling day and night,  
Copra odours wafted light,  
Sea—and language—tinged with blue,  
Thanks for all we owe to you.

#### 4.

Beira native's boot expulsion,  
Aden camel's rope compulsion—  
Thrilling incidents like this  
Make our voyage perfect bliss.

#### 5.

Such a variegated view:  
Turk, and Infidel, and Jew  
On the fo'c'sle cook and sleep;  
Cargo—monkeys—horse and sheep

#### 6.

Negress, on an ample base,  
Seated on a packing-case;  
Arab, negro, man, and boy  
All provided for our joy!

## 7.

Then, when rid of all this lumber,  
Did you, Chief, lie down and slumber ?  
No; you scrubbed and painted so  
We could laugh at P. and O.,  
Paintless—tied up to the bank<sup>1</sup>—  
*Ghoorkha* holds a mail-boat's rank.

## 8.

Now, dear Chief, Farewell ! Adieu !  
Wishing all good luck to you.  
Men—and maidens of the coy age—  
Never will forget this voyage  
And—*O tempora ! O mores !*—  
Remember all your simple stories.

We visited Delagoa Bay, Beira, Chinde, Mozambique, Port Amelia, Zanzibar, Mombasa, Aden, Port Sudan, Suez, Port Said, and Naples, and landed at Marseilles, coming on to London after a short stay in Paris; so ended my experiences in a great Dominion at the most critical stage in its history, the birth of a new nation.

<sup>1</sup> Referring to an incident in the Suez Canal. There was much rivalry between Union Castle and P. and O. lines.

## CHAPTER XIII

### CONCLUSION

*"Knew the joy that's all-abiding, which may come to these alone  
Who, in perfect self-surrender, find a strength beyond their own;  
Spread her snowy wings in gladness at the secret she had won,  
And 'His mercy aye endureth,' said the little galleon."*

(R. A. HORWOOD: *The Galleon.*)

THERE was a celebrated Admiral—I should have written "there is," I am glad to say he is alive and well—of whom a First Lord of the Admiralty remarked: "I like Admiral —, he is so delightfully indiscreet!" The art of combining indiscretion with delightfulness is not given to all; I fear to attempt the combination, so I propose to close down these random "Memories" at the year 1913. Since that year my experiences took me to the Admiralty before the War, to the R.M.A. at Eastney as Second Commandant, to the Admiralty again for the first few weeks of the War, to commands at Ostend, at a training-camp at Dover and Dunkirk, to my old corps as Commandant, and finally to the hub of affairs in the Offices of the War Cabinet. Of experiences during those times I will only mention one, which is of historic interest. As Colonel Second Commandant at Eastney it came within my province to superintend the clothing of the reservists who



were called up when naval mobilisation was ordered. The secret telegram ordering that mobilisation was received from the Admiralty early in the morning of Sunday, August 2nd, 1914. A few hours afterwards reservists living in the neighbourhood began to come into barracks. In the afternoon I was called by telegram to the Admiralty, and saw more crowds of naval and Marine reservists leaving Waterloo Station for the naval ports, followed by the cheers of the people assembled to see them off. The reason why I give the date is in order to furnish a final reply to von Bethmann-Hollweg, the German Imperial Chancellor (for the time being), who, on December 2nd, 1914, stated that "England was the first Great Power which ordered military preparations on a great scale," and that German policy was influenced on *July 31st* by British naval mobilisation, which, as I have shown, was not ordered until the *2nd of August*. Many reservists, as Germany and all the world knew, had been called up specially for our naval manœuvres in the summer of 1914, when there were no war clouds on the European horizon, but they had been sent back to their homes when the manœuvres were over. Some of the immediate class of reservists were, fortunately as it turned out, still on board the ships on August 2nd, when mobilisation was ordered, and all the reservists were called up. With that point settled I can get back to my narrative.

On returning from South Africa the first thing to be done was to report myself at the War Office

and Admiralty. At the War Office I was told many nice things about my work with the British Army in South Africa, and with the new South African army. Then it was made clear to me by an old Staff College friend and colleague, highly placed at the War Office, that, being a Marine, I had nothing more to hope for from the Army; the valuable experience to be gained in the higher posts must be kept for army men. I was very grateful to my old friend for his candour, and having put in about thirty-four years of fairly strenuous work with little chance of rest, took comfort in the prospect of a holiday, and in the Law of the Navy bearing thereupon:

“When the ship that is tired returneth,  
With the signs of the sea showing plain,  
Men place her in dock for a season  
And her speed she reneweth again;  
So shalt thou, lest perchance thou grow weary,  
In the uttermost parts of the sea  
Pray for leave, for the good of the service,  
As frequent and oft as may be !”

I was to give up my rank of Brigadier-General, and when my leave was over I was to rejoin my old corps as a Lieutenant-Colonel, in which rank the moving-staircase of regimental promotion had by that time landed me. I had been just saved by a few months from retirement for age in the rank of Major by an unexpected step, and while I was in South Africa the moving-staircase carried me to the top of the list of Lieutenant-Colonels. Soon afterwards I heard that, as a mark of appreciation of my South African work, I had been made a K.C.B., and that “Their Lordships” had

promoted me specially to the substantive rank of Colonel, beyond which step on the staircase it was clear from a forecast of movements on the list that I had no prospect of rising. Those Laws of the Navy of Captain<sup>1</sup> R. A. Hopwood are wonderful. They seem to have something in them to apply to all situations; I always seem to be quoting them, but this shall be the last extract:

“Count not upon certain promotion,  
But rather to gain it aspire;  
Though the sight-line shall end in the target,  
There cometh, perchance, a miss-fire.”

There's one advantage about the Marine service that is not nearly enough appreciated. It effectively cures the vice of personal ambition. Lucifer might still have been in heaven if he had been a Marine officer. This takes us back to the little story from *Punch* quoted at the end of the first chapter. The poor old Marine of those days grew older and older, and “began to worry them in Whitehall. So he got an official snubbing here, and an official snubbing there, and everywhere lots of snubs. And he bowed down his silvered old head, and broke his heavy old heart, and laid down his tired old bones, and grieved, and grieved until he died. So they cut his epitaph upon his tombstone and wrote—‘Only a Marine!’”

That little *Punch* history made a tremendous impression upon me as a young subaltern, but I remember thinking that he must have been a silly old man not to see his fate ahead of him

<sup>1</sup> Now Rear-Admiral,

and prepare for it. "Worrying them in White-hall" is a foolish employment. You can get plenty of fun out of a Government office if you are inside it, but no amusement whatever while you are in the Service out of attacking it from outside! Luckily some good friend had once presented me with an inkpot with the motto, "The Pen is mightier than the Sword" inscribed thereon. The sight of that inkpot on my table solved the problem of a new career in civil life, which is a much more exciting moving-staircase—one going downwards instead of upwards, so that you must constantly exert yourself or you will find yourself at the bottom; good exercise, both for mind and body, and splendidly rejuvenating.

It has been great fun writing this "amphibiography," and so recalling a jumble of pleasant memories of achievements and of old friendships. Some day, when controversy has died down, I hope to complete the tale by some glimpses behind the scenes in public affairs during the past six years. I began my Memories with the traditional reference to the poverty of authors, I will end them by assuming the traditional gentleness of readers, and hope that I may have interested some of them in my glorious old service about which little is known by the public.

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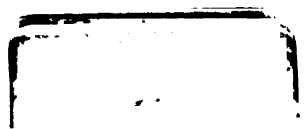


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